Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement
Nov/Dec 2016 • $4.50

Worlds Of Magic, Worlds Of Truth

The Vedic literature reveals a real world beyond our experience and beyond our imagination.

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BACK to GODHEAD

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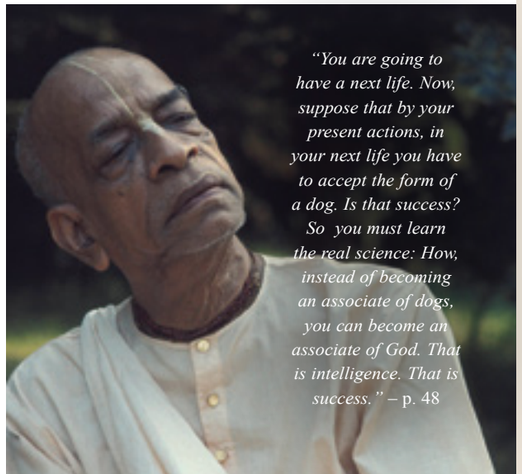
COVER Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are the Absolute Truth. They are the origin of everything, including the endless marvels of the spiritual world, which are far beyond our imagination. Please see the article beginning on page 13. (Painting by Dhṛtī Devī Dāsī)


"You are going to have a next life. Now, suppose that by your present actions, in your next life you have to accept the form of a dog. Is that success? So you must learn the real science: How, instead of becoming an associate of dogs, you can become an associate of God. That is intelligence. That is success." – p. 48

Welcome

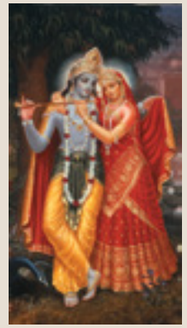
Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged his disciples to write articles for *Back to Godhead*. He gave these basic guidelines: They should read the books he was translating, and write their realizations in their own words.

Because his books are an encyclopedia of spiritual knowledge, they provide an endless variety of topics. In this issue, we find a sample of that variety.

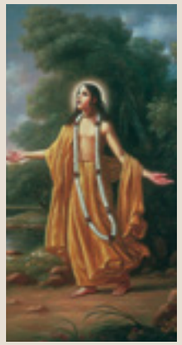
First Śrīla Prabhupāda gives us the key to "Successful Life," and then Nikuñja Vilāsinī Dāsī's "Worlds of Magic, Worlds of Truth" puts a spiritual perspective on our fascination with fantasy in books, art, and film. Karuṇā Dhārinī Dāsī expands on lessons Prabhupāda drew from a story of miners and their newspapers, Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa continues drawing life lessons from India's epics, and Sureśvara Dāsa provides serious thoughts about "Fictional Prabhupādas."

Longtime contributor Viśākhā Dāsī deals with the tricky problem of free will, Ūrmilā Dāsī insightfully discusses sexuality in relation to spiritual life, and Satyarāja Dāsa introduces the *mahā-mantra* to a yoga group. Finally, rounding out the last issue of ISKCON's Fiftieth Anniversary year, Braja Sevakī Dāsī encourages us to hold on to our mood of appreciation as we head into a new year.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. – *Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor*



Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are together the one Supreme Absolute Truth.



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the combined incarnation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, inaugurated the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa five hundred years ago.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Our Purposes

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

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Letters

A Special Thank You from BTG

We would like to express our gratitude to Ms. Vidula "Vidu" Dave, of Winter Park, Florida, who passed away in November last year and had included *Back to Godhead* among the beneficiaries of her estate. Attorney Karl A. Burgunder, who notified us, wrote in an email: "I knew Vidu for about 19 years, first as a client, but soon after as a cherished and lifelong friend. Vidu was a wonderful person with a big heart who never met a stranger. She touched the lives of everyone she met – as a clinician [psychologist], sister, friend, and neighbor – always in the most positive of ways. . . . Vidu was a deeply spiritual person and a committed devotee of the Krishna Consciousness way of life. She was an avid reader of your publication."

May she always find shelter at the lotus feet of the Lord. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

The BTG Staff

Rādhārāṇī's Special Position

I was asked the following question: What made Śrī Rādhā the most pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa if all the *gopīs* were pure devotees? Can you help me?

Julian
Via the Internet

Our reply: First we need to clear up a possible misconception. All the eternal residents of the spiritual world, whether in the Vaikuṇṭha planets or in Goloka Vṛndāvana, are 100% pure. It is not that some are more pure than others. They have different relationships with Kṛṣṇa, but Kṛṣṇa is pleased with all of them. Still, the *gopīs* are considered the highest devotees because they please Him the most. This is stated by Śrīnātha Cakravartī in a line from a verse that summarizes Lord Caitanya's teachings and which Prabhupāda often quoted: *ramyā kācid upāsanā vraja-vadhū-vargeṇa yā kalpitā*: "The most favorable mode of serving Kṛṣṇa is that which was practiced by the young maidens of Vraja." (*Caitanya-mata-mañjuṣā* 1.1.1)

Among the *gopīs*, Rādhārāṇī's position is unique. She's not just one of the *gopīs*; She is Lord Kṛṣṇa's feminine counterpart, the personification of His pleasure potency (*hlādinī-śakti*). The other *gopīs* expand from Her (see *Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.37). It can therefore be said that She has more capacity to love and please Kṛṣṇa than anyone else – because She is the original reservoir of devotion for Him.

Grateful Inmate

ISKCON Prison Ministry receives many wonderful responses from prison inmates whose hearts are touched by Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, which the Prison Ministry distributes to them. Recently we heard from an inmate who is reading *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*. We wanted to share it for the Letters section of BTG as an ISKCON Prison Ministry tribute to ISKCON 50. Here is the letter, from an inmate in a Florida prison:

"I just started reading the fourth volume of *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*. After reading this much, I conclude that Śrīla Prabhupāda had a special ability to bring all people to Kṛṣṇa. The people who came to him were also special people with great benedictions of God upon them to find and serve such a guru. They loved him so dearly. The heat and the impoverished living conditions in India did not deter them. These folks were all alien to the Vedic culture and the country.

"These devotees of Śrīla Prabhupāda were themselves very special people. You have to have the mercy of God to be able to see goodness; and to see and appreciate the goodness of Śrīla Prabhupāda was their destiny.

"I am amazed at everything I read. Thank you so very much."

Govindanandinī Devī Dāsī
ISKCON Prison Ministry

Is Kṛṣṇa a Person?

Some Christians do not believe God has emotions. Does Kṛṣṇa have emotions? Is He a person?

Jakob Sorensen
Denmark

Our reply: Śrīla Prabhupāda has said that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the postgraduate study of religion. We know everything about God, not just that He is a judge or love. He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, personally present in the heart of each of us.

Since we are part of God and we are persons, He too must be a person. We couldn't have something – such as personality – if He didn't. He is Bhagavān, which means that He is full in six primary opulences: He is the most famous person, the most beautiful person, the most intelligent person, the strongest person, the richest person, and even the most renounced person. That is the position of the Supreme Person.

Kṛṣṇa has an unlimited number of loving devotees, and He enjoys personal exchanges with each of them. Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Nectar of Devotion* describes many of Kṛṣṇa's qualities, activities, and relationships.

People talk about love of God. Naturally love has to be between two persons; it is a reciprocation of loving service. How can you love God if He isn't a person? God does have impersonal aspects, but the real devotee is interested in knowing all about the supreme lovable person who is waiting in our hearts for us to look His way.

God is described in detail in the Vedic scriptures, such as in *Brahma-saṁhitā*, Lord Brahmā's prayers composed at the beginning of creation. Please study this and other great timeless Vedic texts. You'll find them spiritually and intellectually satisfying.

Jesus said, "I have so much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now." It's all there now, in the Vedic literature, so don't miss out.

The King of Mantras

It is said that the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is the king of all the mantras. Can you explain the significance and the meaning of the mantra? What has made it unique?

Battu Eshwar Sai
Via the Internet

Our reply: The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is identical to the Absolute Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, or God. God is Absolute, and therefore His name is the same as Him. This fact allows us to come in direct contact with Him through sound vibration, that is, the chanting of His names.

"Hare" addresses the energy, or *śakti*, of the Lord, specifically His highest, internal energy, Rādhā. "Kṛṣṇa" is His original name, and it means the most beautiful one, the most attractive one. "Rāma" is a name of God that means the reservoir of all pleasure. All pleasure, both mundane and spiritual, comes from Him. The *mahā-mantra* is a prayer in which we call out, "O Lord, O energy of the Lord, please accept me; please engage me in Your service."

The *mahā-mantra* is given in the *Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad*, where it is described as the best of all mantras and is particularly recommended for this age. The Lord Himself appeared on earth about five hundred years ago as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to recommend and distribute this chanting of His name for self-realization in this difficult age. Please take advantage of it.

Please write to us at: BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, Florida 32616, USA. Email: editors@krishna.com.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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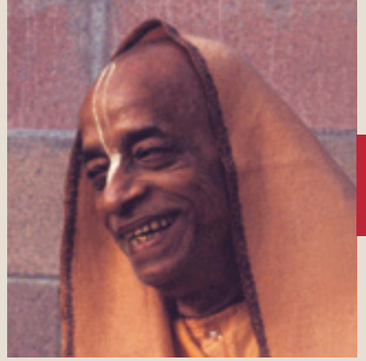
Successful Life



FOUNDER'S LECTURE
New York City, January 3, 1967

Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches that success in life begins by cultivating knowledge of matter and spirit.

by His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society
For Krishna Consciousness

---

buddhir jñānam asammohaḥ
kṣamā satyaṁ damaḥ śamaḥ
sukhaṁ duḥkhaṁ bhavo 'bhāvo
bhayaṁ cābhayam eva ca

ahiṁsā samatā tuṣṭis
tapo dānaṁ yaśo 'yaśaḥ
bhavanti bhāvā bhūtānāṁ
matta eva pṛthag-vidhāḥ

"Intelligence, knowledge, freedom from doubt and delusion, forgiveness, truthfulness, control of the senses, control of the mind, happiness and distress, birth, death, fear, fearlessness, nonviolence, equanimity, satisfaction, austerity, charity, fame, and infamy – all these various qualities of living beings are created by Me alone."

– *Bhagavad-gītā* 10.4–5

WHAT IS *JÑĀNA*, or knowledge? Knowledge means distinguishing spirit from matter. That is knowledge. We should understand what is spirit and what is matter. We are a combination of matter and spirit. Actually we are spirit, but we are now covered by matter. A complete analytical study of matter and spirit is called knowledge. Regarding material knowledge, any subject matter you can learn is temporary. This body is temporary; similarly, any material knowledge you acquire – whether you become a chemist or a physicist or a medical man or an engineer – will finish as soon as this body is finished. You forget. Death means forgetfulness.

Because the spirit, being eternal, does not die, spiritual knowledge continues. Suppose you acquire a certain percentage of spiritual knowl-

edge in this body. That will continue with you after death. Even after the destruction of this body, that spiritual knowledge will continue with you. If you finished ten percent, then you will begin from eleven percent. That knowledge will not be lost. That is the law of nature.

Cultivating spiritual knowledge even one percent or two percent can render you great service because it will continue. Once spiritual knowledge has begun, it will not be stopped.

The best thing is to finish it one hundred percent in this life because this human form of life is meant for cultivating spiritual knowledge. It is not meant for material enjoyment. Material enjoyment means eating, sleeping, defending, and mating. These four principles are called material enjoyment.

The other day I was seeing *The New York Times Magazine*. All the advertisements were based on mating. That's all. Because mating is most attractive, shopkeepers advertise a dress by putting before us a very nice girl. Because our attraction is for mating, as soon as we see a nice girl our attention is diverted. That is the psychology. So these are all material enjoyments: eating, sleeping, defending, and mating.

And spiritual enjoyment is just the opposite; there is no sense enjoyment. There is self-realization, or purifying the senses. Spiritual enjoyment means purifying the senses. It is a purifying process. And as soon as you purify your senses, then you become in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness and eligible for being transferred to the spiritual world.

This human form of life is especially meant for cultivation of spiritual knowledge. There are 8,400,000 species of life, and the most developed consciousness is the human form of life, especially civilized human beings. There are 400,000 species of human beings, with two hands and two legs. Not all of them are using their life efficiently, but Kṛṣṇa consciousness is dormant within them. Even in the lowest aboriginal stage of life there is dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But those in civilized life are quite competent to cultivate this knowledge.

So *jñāna*, knowledge, means distinguishing between spirit and matter. And this knowledge should be cultivated and taken full advantage of in this life. That is a successful life.

YOU'RE INVITED!

The Sunday Feast

Most Hare Kṛṣṇa centers around the world put on a special festival every Sunday—for regulars as well as newcomers. Come by and get a taste of the world's oldest cultural tradition. Call your nearest center to find out the schedule for the Sunday Feast.

Visit http://directory.krishna.com.

Freedom to Travel Anywhere

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.18) it is stated, *tasyaiva hetoḥ prayateta kovido na labhyate yad bhramatām upary adhaḥ*. Now, a living entity, a spiritual spark, is wandering, not only from one country to another country or from one body to another but from one planet to another. The living entity is called *sarva-ga. Sarva* means "all," and *ga* means "one can go." You can go anywhere. Now you have the facility to travel over the surface of the earth or in the space around the earth. But you cannot go beyond the earth's atmosphere. This is called conditioned life.

In conditioned life we are limited in our traveling. But in spiritual life you can travel anywhere. The best example is Nārada Muni. He can travel anywhere he likes. In this universe we have got a planet called Siddhaloka, a "planet of the perfect." Those who live there are not completely perfect, but they are called *siddha*. *Siddha* means almost perfect. The inhabitants of that planet can travel without the aid of a spaceship or an airplane from one planet to another. We get this information from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

In spiritual life we have complete freedom to move, to act, to enjoy. Spiritual knowledge should be cultivated. That is the best use of this human form of life. If we do not use the human form of life for spiritual cultivation, then we are practically committing suicide.

If you want to cross the Atlantic Ocean from New York to England, you must have a very nice ship and a good captain and a favorable atmosphere. Then it is very easy to cross. That example is given in a Sanskrit verse, *nṛ-deham ādyaṁ su-labham* . . . Material existence is compared to an ocean. *Bhava-sāgara. Sāgara* means ocean. To cross this ocean you have a very nice ship. What is that ship? *Nṛ-deham*, this human form of life. And this ship is *su-labham. Su-labham* means that you cannot always get this kind of ship. It is a rare opportunity.

This is an opportunity because you do not know what is going to happen in your next life. There is no guarantee that in the next life you are going to take your birth in America or in the human form of life. There is no guarantee. Therefore, as long as you have this opportunity, you must fully utilize it.

Su-durlabham means it is very difficult to get this human body. Just imagine. By the gradual evolutionary process from aquatic life to plant life, then from plant life to worm life, then from worm life to bird life, then from bird life to beast life, from beast life to human life – this is the gradual process of evolution. Therefore this human form of life is very difficult to obtain. By some fortune you have it now. Therefore it is said, *su-labhaṁ su-durlabham,* very rare and difficult to get.

So you have this nice ship of the human body. Then, *guru-karṇa-dhāram*: if you have a spiritual master who is a good captain, he can help you to ply your ship. And the favorable atmosphere is Kṛṣṇa consciousness, created by the Supreme Lord by delivering you the message of *Bhagavad-gītā*. So you have a very good atmosphere. Just compare in the same way: If in the Atlantic Ocean there is no wind, no hurricane, and you have a very good ship and a very good captain, now take this opportunity of crossing. If you don't cross, then you are committing suicide.

Don't Hesitate

These are the opportunities of developing your knowledge in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and spiritual culture. And the advantage is that as soon as you become fully conscious of your constitutional position, then you are freed from this material entanglement. This is called *jñānam,* the second word in this verse.

The next word is *asammohaḥ.* Don't be hesitant. *Asammohaḥ* means that if you want to acquire some knowledge, you may acquire it slowly, but acquire it very surely, step by step. Don't be impatient. *Asammohaḥ.* Don't blindly accept something and think, "I have all knowledge. Finished." No.

You have developed consciousness, you have intelligence, but that intelligence and that consciousness depend also on your mode of living, on your mode of behavior. Therefore one has to become a *brāhmaṇa – sāttvika*, in the modes of goodness. Then you will be patient, or *śānta*, peaceful. If you become hesitant, then you cannot be peaceful.

Kṣamā means tolerant. You should not be disturbed. Suppose you are in this Kṛṣṇa conscious society. Now, you cannot expect that all the members of the society will be first-class men. How can we expect that? We are collecting members of the society from all classes of men. So there may be a man in goodness, a man in passion, and a man in ignorance. But if you think, "Oh, this man is not good. That man is not good." No. You should be tolerant. You haven't got any connection with this man or that man. You are connected with the philosophy, with the process of life. The same example: Suppose you are on the ship. You do not find all men to be of your choice. There may be different kinds of men. But what is that to you? You have to patiently cross the Atlantic Ocean. Just sit down tightly on the

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millennia ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in b**u**t, long **ā** like the **a** in f**a**r (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in ev**a**de, long **ī** like the **i** in p**i**que. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **ri**m, and **c** like the **ch** in **ch**air. Pronounce consonants like **ch**, **jh**, and **dh** as in staun**ch-h**eart, hed**ge-h**og, and re**d-h**ot. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh**. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or his great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

ship and take advantage of the opportunity. That is your business. This is called *kṣamā*, tolerance.

Suppose somebody has offended you. Excuse him. This is a kind of penance. Lord Caitanya has taught us:

tṛṇād api sunīcena
taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ

If you want to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, then you have to become tolerant. How? Just like a tree. How tolerant a tree is! Everybody is committing offenses to the tree. Somebody is snatching its twigs, somebody is snatching its flowers, somebody is snatching its leaves, somebody is cutting it, but it does not protest. Rather, on the contrary, it supplies you fruits and flowers and gives you shelter. The tree is the nicest example of tolerance. So Lord Caitanya teaches us that we should become tolerant just like a tree. And *tṛṇād api sunīcena,* forbearance like grass. You trample grass, but it does not protest.

Amāninā. And you should not be puffed up with your artificial honor. "Oh, I am this. I am that." Such considerations have to do with the body, but you are apart from the body. Suppose you are a king in this body. You have no connection with the body. And suppose you are the poorest man. You have no connection with the body. So why do you identify yourself as "I am poor" or "I am a king"? You are neither a king nor a poor man. You are a spirit soul.

Therefore you should not hanker after the temporary honors of this material world. Honor and dishonor are the same thing because we do not belong to that kind of honor and dishonor.

Mānadena. But if some foolish creature disturbs you, you should give him all honor. Give all honor to whoever identifies with the body. "Oh, sir, you are very beautiful. You are very learned." So that he may not disturb you, give him all honor.

Kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ. If you act in these ways, you can go on chanting without being disturbed. As soon as you take to spiritual life, there will be so many disturbances, because it is a declaration of war against the illusory energy. So as soon as you become Kṛṣṇa conscious, the illusory energy sees, "Oh, this man is going out of my hand, out of my control. Oh, give him all impediments." Therefore you have to learn tolerance.

Instead of becoming subservient to something false, the best thing is to become subservient to the Absolute Truth.

What Is Truth?

The next word here is *satyam*. *Satyam* means you should speak the actual truth. You should not flatter for sense gratification.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.1.1) the definition of *satyam*, specifically the Absolute Truth, is given. What is that definition? *Janmādy asya yataḥ*: "The Absolute Truth is that from which everything emanates, the original source of all." You should understand what is *satyam*, the Absolute Truth. And you should speak truth also.

What is that truth? That truth is "God is great and we are subservient to Him. So our duty is to abide by the orders of God." The simple truth. "God is great." You can say, "Why should we abide by the orders of God?" Because you are subservient. "No, I am not subservient." That is untrue. You are subservient. If you don't accept your subordinate position before God, then you have to accept your subordinate position under these stringent material laws. You have to become subservient. There is no alternative. You cannot become absolute.

It is a false notion that you are independent. You are not independent. Nobody is independent. We may be puffed up: "We belong to an independent nation." India was under British rule. Now we have independence. But this is all a false notion. What is that independence? Nature's law is forcing starvation. What is this independence? Indians are now begging grains from other countries. In British time there was no begging at least. Now their independence means they are begging.

So these are all false notions. Nobody is independent. Everyone is dependent in some way or other under the laws of nature. Nature can at once enforce its stringent laws, and everyone becomes subservient. To be subservient is your nature. You cannot alter it. Instead of becoming subservient to something false, the best thing is to become subservient to the Absolute Truth. *Satyaṁ paraṁ dhīmahi.*

Therefore the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* instructs you to offer your respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Truth. That is your perfection of life.

The Importance Of Sense Control

The next word, *damaḥ*, means to control the senses. Now you are sitting here. It is very kind of you. But you could go to a cinema house or hear television or . . . It is simply a waste of time. You have to control your senses in such a way that every moment is being used for your spiritual cultivation of life. You should not allow the senses to enjoy anything against the cultivation of spiritual life. That is called *damaḥ*, control.

You can eat. You can go to a restaurant and have very palatable dishes of meats and so many things. But you have to control the tongue: "No. I shall not eat all this nonsense. I shall eat only *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*." Eating is not prohibited, because without eating you cannot live. That's all right. Even if you don't accept *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*, you can try to become vegetarian. In your country especially I see you have enough arrangement for vegetable dishes. I have been here for more than one year. I am getting nice vegetable dishes prepared by our nice student Kīrtanānanda. You are also tasting them. They are very nice.

You should not allow the senses to enjoy something against the advancement of your spiritual life. That is called *damaḥ*. "Swami," this title, means one who can control the senses. He is called swami, master of the senses. Generally we are all servants because our constitutional position is to be subservient. So we are servants of this material nature, which means we are servants of the senses. That's all. We have this material body, and the senses are prominent. We are active in the material body, and that means we are acting in sense gratification. We are practically servants of the senses. To become master of the senses requires that the senses not act according to their whims. The senses should act according to your order.

Suppose there is a very nice performance of sense gratification and you want to go there. But if you can control your senses – "No, not to go there. Come here into this storefront. Hear *Bhagavad-gītā*" – then you become master, swami.

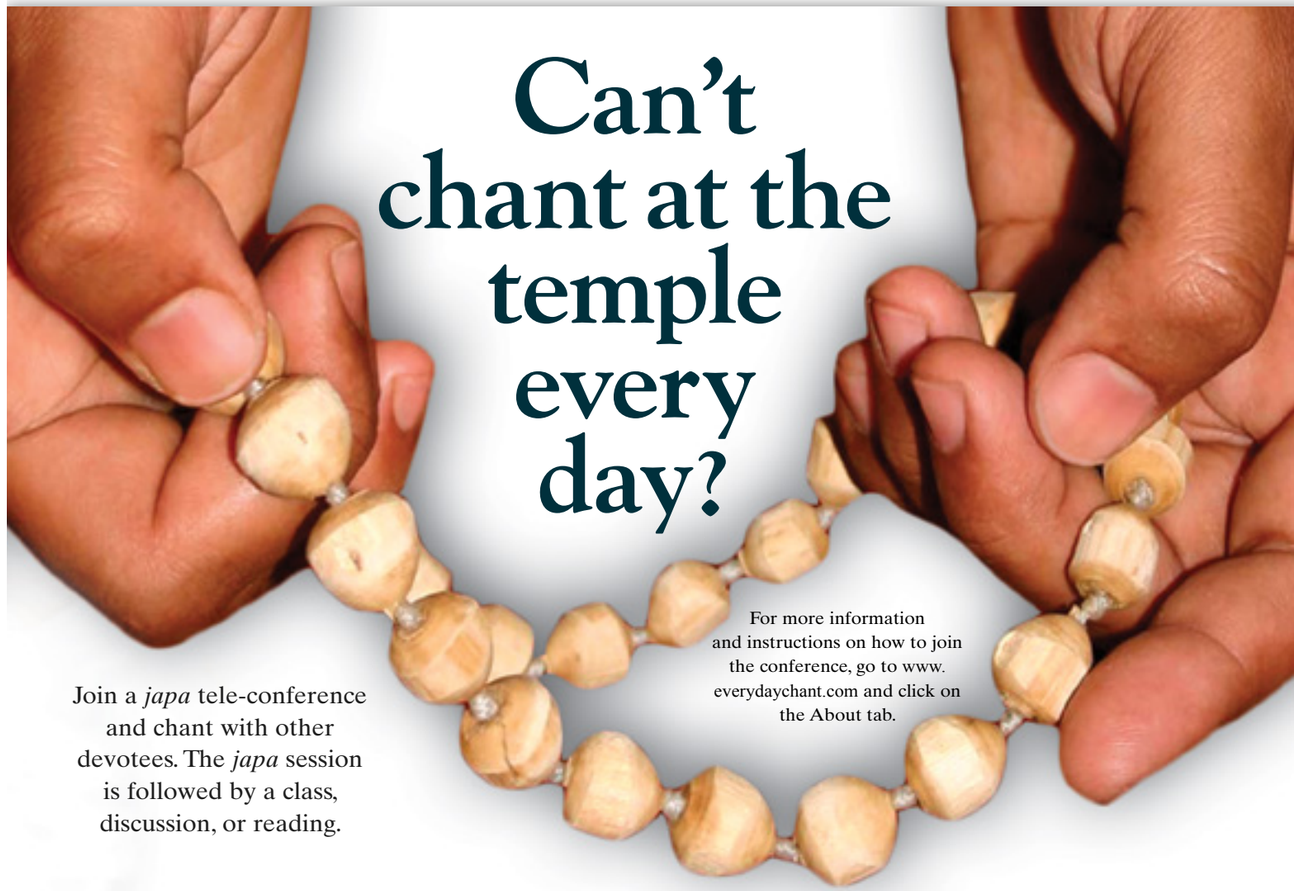
The most important task for controlling the senses is to control the tongue. I have several times explained that the tongue is the beginning of all the senses. So if you can control the tongue, then you can control the other senses also. And if you cannot control the tongue, then you cannot control the other senses.

The tongue has two functions: to taste and to vibrate. Vibrate Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare and taste *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*. Then just see how you are making advancement. This is called *damaḥ*.

As soon as you are able to control your senses, naturally you shall be able to control your mind. That is called *śamaḥ*.

These are aspects of the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We have to practice this process and learn it from reliable sources and assimilate it into our life. That is the real utilization of this human form of life. We should learn this process. We should practice it and make our life successful.

Thank you very much.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Painting by Śuddha-bhakta Dāsa

Worlds of MAGIC Worlds of TRUTH

The Vedic literature reveals a real world beyond our experience and beyond our imagination.

by Nikuñja Vilāsinī Devī Dāsī

EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL and mythical creatures have invaded our world, along with gods and superheroes, gnomes and fairies, dwarves and elves, hobbits and wizards, hippogriffs and dragons, centaurs and Cyclopes. These are the creations of imaginative geniuses – filmmakers, writers, and artists – who are pouring out more gripping and fascinating blockbusters than ever before. Some of their ideas stem from mythology, legends, and folklore that have intrigued man for thousands of years.

How ironic it is that people are drawn to a world of fantasy and make-believe yet are skeptical about metaphysical phenomena. We

*Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma baffle King Jarāsandha by jumping from a high mountain and evading his pursuit. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Canto 10, Chapter 52).*

doubt the paranormal in the world but seek satisfaction in fables and fairytales, in magic and fantasy, hoping to fulfill the parts of our being attracted to the supernatural. For centuries we have imagined worlds existing outside our domain of sense perception and reality. The idea of a mystical world intrigues us and gives us a sense of wonder. Perhaps it is an intuitive yearning to know what lies beyond this world, a world restricted by nature's laws.

This yearning comes from the core of our being. As spirit souls, we want to experience a life compatible with our spiritual nature, an eternal life that radiates supreme knowledge and bliss. Yet, because we are confined to the limits of our bodies and minds, we assume there is nothing outside our paradigm of existence.

Our knowledge of the universe is based on sense perception and inference, which are incomplete and imperfect.

The analogy of the frog in a well illustrates this misconception. Once a frog who lived in a well enquired about his frog friend's recent travels. The friend told him he had seen the ocean. The well-bound frog tried to imagine the size of the ocean and asked, "Is it double the size of this well? Triple the size?" His friend simply laughed and told him it was much larger than that. The frog in the well could not begin to fathom the vastness of the ocean, and continued to compare it to his tiny well. Eventually he gave up, having nothing in his experience with which to compare the ocean. Similarly, we are bound by our experience. And our knowledge of the universe and other realms is based on sense perception and inference, which are incomplete and imperfect. It would be better to accept information from a more reliable source.

In the Vedic tradition there are standard *pramāṇas*, or means of acquiring knowledge of God and the universe, of which *śabda* is considered the best and most important. *Śabda* is revelation from God or the valid testimony of God's pure devotee, who comes in a line of spiritual teachers and presents the scriptures without interpreting or changing anything. Because human sense perception and intelligence are fallible and imperfect, spiritual seekers acquire knowledge through the *śabda* process, which is flawless when followed in the proper way. The scriptures reveal the truth and reality of God, His creation, and His spiritual kingdom through His pure devotees, who directly perceive the revelations of the scriptures.

Only someone who has traveled beyond the boundaries of our well-like world will be able to disclose the nature of the world beyond our vision.

Higher-Dimensional Universe

In his book *Vedic Cosmography and Astronomy*, Richard L. Thompson (Sadāpūta Dāsa) elaborates on this concept. He describes some of the intricacies of the universe and explains that with our limited three-dimensional vision we can only understand the universe relative to these limitations. Higher-dimensional perception, which includes observation of higher planetary systems and beings, requires superior vision not available to ordinary human beings. Some rare persons have acquired higher-dimensional perception through yoga or other spiritual means. Their elevated consciousness has allowed them to enter normally invisible realms on earth and beyond.

In previous ages this was common practice. People whose lives centered on godly principles dominated the Vedic age. It was not unusual for them to travel to other realms in our universe. But gradually the earth saw a decline in spiritual consciousness. People became slaves to their senses and chose an inferior quality of life. Weakened by mundane desires and polluted habits, they lost the higher sensory perception and mystic powers available to people of previous ages.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the paramount Vedic treatise on God and His creation, describes the eight primary mystic perfections in detail: transforming one's body to become smaller than the smallest, or greater than the greatest, or lighter than the lightest; acquiring whatever one desires; experiencing any enjoyable object, either in this world or another; manipulating the material energy; controlling others and being unimpeded by material nature; and obtaining anything from anywhere.

Although the earth is becoming devoid of people with these powers, the residents of higher planetary systems, including beings named Siddhas, Cāraṇas, Vidyādharas, and Gandharvas, possess these eight mystic perfections as well as secondary ones: being free from hunger and thirst and other bodily disturbances, hearing and seeing things far away, moving the body at the speed of the mind, assuming any form one desires, entering the bodies of others, dying when one desires, and many others. (*Bhāgavatam* 11.15.4–8)

The powers of our modern-day stereotype superheroes pale in comparison to these extraordinary beings. The opulence and powers in their realms far exceed anything we have seen, heard of, or experienced in our earthly paradigm. Life there seems to last forever; time seems to stand still when life spans reach millions of years. But although there is no disease and old age, life there is still temporary. Death still prevails. The danger of seeking residence in these realms or wanting to enjoy these powers is the urge to covet prestige, status, and control – in other words, to be God. These material allurements can also leave one with little sense of dependence on the Supreme Lord and thus bind one to an endless cycle of birth and death.

Beyond the Material Sphere

So is there some place that supersedes all others and truly satisfies the soul? Yes. The spiritual world – beyond the material spheres of existence. That is where we belong. Although spiritual realms far exceed the grandeur of even the best material planets, souls who go there focus only on their pure loving relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. By hearing about the Lord in His spiritual abode – our eternal home – we can ignite our desire to reconnect to that transcendental plane.

The *Vedas* describe invisible material realms that exist on earth. Might spiritual realms also exist on earth? The scriptures reveal that they do, but like other higher-dimensional planes, they are invisible to most of us. Only to someone whose consciousness has evolved to pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa are the spiritual realms on earth and beyond revealed.

Vrindavan, the birthplace of Lord Kṛṣṇa, is one such realm. Although it is a geographical location visible to our mundane eyes, the unmanifested eternal Vṛndāvana can be observed and experienced only with eyes smeared with divine love. Some of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's followers, who possessed this supreme love, revealed many of Kṛṣṇa's pastime places in Vrindavan. In 1514 CE, during the holy month of Kārtika, Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself, who is a merciful incarnation of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa combined, discovered two unique ponds that had been lost for centuries. Immersed in the loving mood of Rādhārāṇī, He looked for Kṛṣṇa everywhere as He wandered on the pathways near Govardhana Hill. When He came to the town of Ariṣṭagrāma, He asked its residents, "Where is Rādhā-kuṇḍa?" Then He saw something that made Him run towards it. Passersby could not understand why two puddles of muddy water in the middle of a paddy field could excite Him so much. They were even more surprised when He bathed in the puddles and then marked His body with their mud. He had found Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa. Only His followers with a similar vision could understand why these *kuṇḍas* (ponds) were so close to His heart.

Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, one

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of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's devout followers, later excavated and enlarged the *kuṇḍas* because he knew that many pilgrims would eventually come there to bathe in the holy waters. During the excavation, Yudhiṣṭhira Mahājāja, one of the five Pāṇḍava brothers of the *Mahābhārata*, appeared to Raghunātha in a dream and told him not to cut down the trees around Śyāma-kuṇḍa because he and his four brothers were residing there as trees and performing worship on its banks. What were they seeing, and why were they worshiping these *kuṇḍas*, which can be perceived only by those with divine vision? Why did the name Ariṣṭagrāma remind Lord Caitanya of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa?

The Origins of the Kuṇḍas

More than four thousand years before, Kṛṣṇa killed a ferocious bull demon named Ariṣṭa, who had terrorized Vrindavan. Pleased with His own heroic deed, Kṛṣṇa met Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* for the moonlit *rāsa* dance. But the *gopīs* bluntly refused to be with Kṛṣṇa because He had committed the sin of killing a bull.

When Rādhā told Him He would have to bathe in all the sacred waters of the universe to become purified, He replied in disbelief, "O Rādhe! That will take a long time, which means being away from You. Even one moment away from You distresses Me."

Then His face lit up with an idea.

"I know what to do. I'll call all the sacred waters of the universe to come here instead."

The *gopīs* sneered.

"Kānhā, don't trick us with your words. We're not going to be fooled by Your magic."

Ignoring their remarks, Kṛṣṇa struck the ground with His right foot, making a depression. Placing His flute to His lips, He played a melody that sparkled as if turning sound to gold, and immediately all the sacred rivers personified appeared before Him, bowing their heads in reverence.

The holy rivers introduced themselves one by one: Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Kāverī, Godāvarī . . . Then as Kṛṣṇa summoned each of them, they poured their water into the hole, forming a dazzling pond. Kṛṣṇa jumped into the cool water, bathed, and then invited the *gopīs* to enter His *kuṇḍa*.

"How can we enter your *kuṇḍa*?" they replied. "Its water is contaminated with Your sin!"

Kṛṣṇa tried to convince the *gopīs* that His *kuṇḍa* was pure, but they disagreed and decided to make their own *kuṇḍa*. Digging with their golden bangles, they deepened a hole made by Ariṣṭāsura's hoof. After the *gopīs* had finished, Kṛṣṇa suggested they take some water from His *kuṇḍa* to fill the hole they had dug. They stubbornly refused. Rādhārāṇī sent countless *gopīs* to nearby Mānasī Gaṅgā to collect water to fill the new *kuṇḍa*, but eventually their efforts were in vain. Because Kṛṣṇa cannot bear to see even a bead of perspiration on Rādhārāṇī's forehead, He signaled the rivers personified to appear again.

They bowed before Śrīmatī Rādhikā and prayed, "We thought the perfection of our lives was to be associated with Kṛṣṇa. But now we see that Kṛṣṇa is worshiping and serving You. We realize that to be associated with You is the perfection of life. Please allow us to enter Your *kuṇḍa*."

The rivers' sweet words melted Rādhā's heart. She also knew that there was no question of Kṛṣṇa ever being contaminated. Her behavior was simply meant to increase His pleasure.

The holy water from Śyāma-kuṇḍa then broke through its wall and entered Rādhā's *kuṇḍa*.

Kṛṣṇa exclaimed, "Your *kuṇḍa* is exceedingly more beautiful than Mine. It will be My favorite *kuṇḍa*. And because it is identical to You and is filled with Your love for Me, its glories will exceed the glories of My *kuṇḍa*."

Transcendental Eyesight

The Vedic scriptures reveal countless fascinating stories like this one, and in Vrindavan we find historical monuments to many of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Vrindavan on earth is a replica of Vṛndāvana in the spiritual world. We may not yet qualify to perceive Rādhā-kuṇḍa with its banks laden with billions of conscious, blissful wish-fulfilling stones, its exquisite gardens and groves, or its desire trees and creepers made of coral and rubies. But we can appreciate and experience the special sanctity of this holy place by seeing through the eyes of those who possess transcendental eyesight.

We learn from these seers of truth that magic exists in Vṛndāvana but there it is meant to enhance Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.6), Lord Kṛṣṇa describes His world: "That supreme abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by fire or electricity. . . ." Self-illumined Vṛndāvana opens and closes like the whorl of a lotus flower, allowing far distances to become close for Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* to meet. The cows are *kāma-dhenus*, or wish-fulfilling, and give unlimited supplies of milk. The trees (*kalpa-vṛksa*) and the silver dust that decorates the footpaths are also wish-fulfilling. Animals, birds, and even inanimate objects are fully conscious beings with a special connection to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa and His devotees can expand themselves to be at different places simultaneously. Paurṇamāsī and Vṛndādevī, the chief coordinators of Kṛṣṇa's affairs in Vṛndāvana, arrange for flowers and fruits of different seasons to appear at the same time and enhance the forest scenes with a kaleidoscope of color and beauty.

Reading or hearing about Kṛṣṇa's astounding pastimes in Vṛndāvana will satisfy our innate spiritual need to be connected with the supreme spiritual person, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Mundane tales bind us to the material sphere, whereas spiritual tales uplift us. They are ever fresh and purify our hearts. When we are in contact with Kṛṣṇa's name, form, abode, and pastimes, we are in direct contact with Him. Our spiritual nature becomes uncovered, and we begin to see things as they are. Free from illusion, we see beyond the purview of the material mind and senses. When we're steeped in pure devotion, neither supernatural powers nor anything else can distract us from serving and pleasing Kṛṣṇa.

So if you want to ride on aerial chariots (*vimānas*), visit a land of magical creatures, or meet the best of superheroes, you do not need to have extrasensory perception or mystic powers. Simply by reading the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, and other timeless classics of the Vedic literature, you can enter the wondrous world of the Lord and His pure devotees. Their true stories of wonder and magic will satisfy your taste for fantasy and adventure, and their profound lessons of spiritual wisdom will satisfy the soul. Do not dive into the realm of mythical science fiction or even that of the mystic yogi where your journey will end. Become a topmost mystic, and experience the real thing.

We learn from seers of truth that magic exists in Vṛndāvana but there it is meant to enhance Kṛṣṇa's pleasure.

Nikuñja Vilāsinī Devī Dāsī (Nirvana Kasopersad), a disciple of His Holiness Girirāja Swami, lives with her husband and two children in Durban, South Africa. She works as a free-lance writer and editor.

A Pause for Prayer

Painting by Parīkṣit Dāsa

King Citraketu gains the audience of Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa, a plenary expansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa arrived with the four Kumāras, ancient sages who keep their bodies from aging beyond boyhood.

This prayer was spoken by Vṛtrāsura, who was King Citraketu in his previous life.

O my Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, will I again be able to be a servant of Your eternal servants who find shelter only at Your lotus feet? O Lord of my life, may I again become their servant so that my mind may always think of Your transcendental attributes, my words always glorify those attributes, and my body always engage in the loving service of Your Lordship?

O my Lord, source of all opportunities, I do not desire to enjoy in Dhruvaloka, the heavenly planets, or the planet where Lord Brahmā resides, nor do I want to be the supreme ruler of all the earthly planets or the lower planetary systems. I do not desire to be master of the powers of mystic yoga, nor do I want liberation if I have to give up Your lotus feet.

O lotus-eyed Lord, as baby birds that have not yet developed their wings always look for their mother to return and feed them, as small calves tied with ropes await anxiously the time of milking, when they will be allowed to drink the milk of their mothers, or as a morose wife whose husband is away from home always longs for him to return and satisfy her in all respects, I always yearn for the opportunity to render direct service unto You.

– Vṛtrāsura (formerly King Citraketu)
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.11.24–26

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NO NEWSPAPERS!

The Miners' Mentality

How to protect our spiritual lives from the constant allure of mundane topics.

by Karuṇā Dhārinī Devī Dāsī

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA a few times repeated a story he had heard from a friend about a preacher trying to persuade coalminers in Sheffield, England.

"Do you know Jesus?" the preacher asked.

All the miners wore a number on their shirt, so they asked the preacher, "What is Jesus' number?"

"I am referring to Jesus the Savior," the preacher said. "He doesn't wear a number."

"Then we don't know him," they replied.

"Well, if you don't know Jesus, then you must go to hell."

"What is hell?" asked the miners.

"Hell is a very dark and damp place," replied the preacher.

The miners were silent, unimpressed; they worked in such a place. The preacher had to consider how to impress them.

After a few moments he said, "Hell is very dangerous."

"How?"

"There are no newspapers."

"Oh! Horrible!"

Śrīla Prabhupāda told this amusing story to portray the irony of conditioned human nature. And he liked to poke fun at people's acute interest in topics that are, from the spiritual perspective, banal. It's the miners'

mentality – enthrallment with mundane topics, especially the news.

Śrīla Prabhupāda did not closely follow current events, although he was often aware of top news stories and even included references to such in his writing and lectures. For example, on a flight he saw the *Time* magazine cover story "Crime: Why – and What to do?" He commented on it several times. He also addressed other issues, such as the assassination of President Kennedy, the Vietnam War, and the Watergate political conspiracy.

But he was not interested in getting a newspaper subscription. I learned this from a man I met about twenty years ago. He told me that as a boy, he used to deliver the *Los Angeles Times* to the minister's quarters of the church that is now the ISKCON temple in Los Angeles. When ISKCON bought the property and Prabhupāda moved into the residence, the boy kept delivering the papers until the subscription ran out. The man told me he had met Prabhupāda, who seemed to like receiving the paper. But when the subscription soon ran out, Prabhupāda declined the paperboy's request to subscribe.

Prabhupāda was not interested in getting a newspaper subscription. I learned this from a man I met about twenty years ago.

Regarding the wholesale proliferation of the news, Śrīla Prabhupāda later spoke to a gathering of people in India:

> You don't see it here, but in America they actually have a big paper shortage. They cut down so many trees to produce newspapers. How many, many pages it is, with so many advertisements, and it is thrown onto the street. And sometimes for days and days it lies there. No one picks it up. It is neglected.

In my childhood the newspaper weighed four to five pounds. My mother and her father were newspaper editors. My father was a reporter and photographer, and his father was a typesetter for sixty years. My aunt drew pictures for newspaper advertisements.

At family or social gatherings, they would often complain or tell stories about their work. The news and their roles in the news business seemed to have stolen their weary minds. I admired their courage and dedication, but after some years of practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I came to see that my beloved, hard-working family were victims of the miners' mentality.

How to See

Śrīla Prabhupāda's often disparaging remarks about newspapers might suggest that, for the sake of strictly observing spiritual practice, devotees of Kṛṣṇa should disregard what is happening in the world around them. But the Vedic literature teaches that devotees must observe the world around them and see things correctly. Spiritual authorities throughout the ages repeatedly warn us not to observe this world (and the news of it) with our naked eye alone. In his purport to *Śrī Īśopaniṣad*, Mantra 6, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

> The naked eye cannot see anything properly, due to its material defectiveness. One cannot see properly unless he has heard from a superior source. And the highest source is the Vedic wisdom spoken by the Lord Himself. This truth is coming in disciplic succession from the Lord to Brahmā, from Brahmā to Nārada, from Nārada to Vyāsa, and from Vyāsa to many of his disciples.

With the naked eye we may see a miner or a preacher, a newspaper editor or a movie star, but in fact we have not seen the persons at all, not as the *ācāryas* see them. For that matter we may visit a news website but in fact not learn about the news at all, not from the spiritual perspective. So it becomes the devotee's duty, as well as pleasure, to ask himself, "How to see this? How would my spiritual master process this information?"

By reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and hearing recorded conversations with him, we can get excellent examples of this. Śrīla Prabhupāda artfully included references to the top news of his day in his writings and lectures. For example, in a lecture to his young audience in New York in 1966, Prabhupāda poignantly addressed their well-meaning proclivity to march and protest against the Vietnam War:

> This world is full of danger. At any moment things may become chaotic. Why, you young people, are you waging these war protests? Because you can perceive that there will be danger. This war is danger. But although you may protest this war, still you must go on fighting. From the very moment of our birth, we are fighting with material nature. From the moment of our birth we are dying. So why do you want to stop war? Why stop war if life and death are not at all within your hands? This cannot at all satisfy you young boys and girls. It will be better to make a spiritual solution to this birth and death.

Śrīla Prabhupāda well knew that his listeners were constantly hearing about the war in Vietnam. They had a certain way of looking at the situation, but he had Kṛṣṇa's perspective.

The Power of Hearing

Most people want to communicate with others, and this often involves hearing, reading, or discussing information. We want the latest breaking news, the relevant and the sensational.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has poetically put forth instructions on this topic in his short, powerful treatise *The Nectar of Instruction.* He labels the tendency to discuss mundane subjects "the urge to speak."

> A sober person who can tolerate the urge to speak, the mind's demands, the actions of anger, and the urges of the tongue, belly, and genitals is qualified to make disciples all over the world. (*The Nectar of Instruction,* Text 1)

In lieu of making material topics one's focus, a sober person will tolerate the urge to speak about mundane affairs and instead choose to engage his mind in self-realization by studying and discussing spiritual topics. Devotees do not wish to hear from people surrendered to the material urges Rūpa Gosvāmī mentions. Anything less than hearing from a sober devotee of the Lord can distract us from the goal of focus on Kṛṣṇa.

Newspapers, magazines, television, the Internet – all are a grand intriguing production of people's urge to speak. The minute we put ourselves in contact with them, we access a Pandora's box. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "A toad in a field speaks by croaking, and similarly everyone who has a tongue wants to speak, even if all he has to say is nonsense. The croaking of the toad, however, simply invites the snake: 'Please come here and eat me.' Nevertheless, although it is inviting death, the toad goes on croaking." (*The Nectar of Instruction*, Text 1, Purport)

To talk and listen is our natural urge. If gagged for only one hour, we may find the situation intolerable. An illness that takes away our speaking or hearing makes us feel helpless. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī questions the quality of our speech. Do we have time to uselessly croak? We have a human life with which to perfect our spiritual understanding, and the way we use our power of hearing and speaking very much determines just how our mentality evolves as the years go by.

Murder, war, terrorism, the stock market, natural catastrophes – these are all products of the incredible deluding power of Kṛṣṇa's material energy, and we can learn from studying them. But focusing on these topics alone is dangerous. It increases our association with the ignorant nature of this world and conditions us to it. Should we hear about these

(*please turn to page 60*)

FREE ONLINE COURSE

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This course, taught by Cārucandra Dāsa under the auspices of ISKCON Baltimore, is being presented online via video teleconferencing. It consists of six modules, each covering one of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Six Sandarbhas*. Each module is 24 weekly classes. Following completion of Modules 1 & 2, *Śrī Tattva-* & *Bhagavat-sandarbha*, respectively, Module 3, on *Śrī Paramātma-sandarbha*, begins in January 2017. This is a treatise on Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's localized expansion, the Supersoul, who is situated in every living entity's heart and in every atom of the universe. He is both the source and the ingredients of the creation. This *Sandarbha* also discusses the ontology of the living entities and material nature as distinct potencies of Paramātmā, or the Supersoul.

INSTRUCTOR: Cārucandra Dāsa (Chandrakant P. Giri, PhD) is a disciple of His Holiness Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and a graduate of the Teacher Training Course taught by the Vrindavan Institute for Higher Education (VIHE). He has been teaching "Thematic Essence" courses on Śrīla Prabhupāda's books for the past thirteen years.

REGISTRATION: For detailed information and to register for the *Paramātma-sandarbha* course, go to www.tinyurl.com/6sandarbha or bhaktishastra.com.

Devastation By Disinformation

We can learn valuable lessons from the actions of Kaikeyī, who was drawn into her maidservant's cunning scheme.

by Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa

ONE OF THE MOST heartwrenching events in the entire *Rāmāyaṇa* is the conspiracy that led to the exile of Rāma. From the devotional perspective, this pastime brings forth the exalted spiritual emotion of love in separation. From the cosmic administration's perspective, it triggers the chain of events that culminate in Rāma's fulfilling the purpose of His descent: ending Rāvaṇa's reign of terror. Simultaneously, from the ethical perspective, the pastime illustrates our human vulnerability to disinformation – it shows how even good people can get misled into doing terrible things.

In our culture, many vested interests promote their self-serving ends through systematic disinformation campaigns. So, a close look at this *Rāmāyaṇa* pastime can help us combat disinformation.

A Mission of Manipulation

This story unfolded in the city of Ayodhya, the capital of the kings of the solar dynasty. Daśaratha, the reigning monarch, had ruled virtuously for many years. On seeing his old age approaching, he felt inspired to transfer power to a worthy successor, his oldest son, Rāma. To formalize this decision, he called an extended assembly of courtiers and leading citizens from various classes. The assembly unanimously approved his decision. They resolved that the process for succession begin the very next morning.

The *Rāmāyaṇa's* spotlight shifts from this jubilant public setting to a private one: the inner chambers of the palace of Kaikeyī, Daśaratha's youngest wife. Her

The maidservant Mantharā proposes her evil plan to Queen Kaikeyī.

Painting by Annapūrṇā Devī Dāsī

beauty had made her the king's favorite queen, displacing the senior queen, Kauśalyā. Despite the inevitable tensions created by such a power shift, the overall family atmosphere remained cordial. Neither Kauśalyā nor Kaikeyī bore any malice towards the other. Their respective sons, Rāma and Bharata, as well as the two other siblings, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna (sons of an intermediate queen, Sumitra), lived in cheerful fraternal amity.

This familial harmony was destroyed in one night during which a self-interested person launched a mission of manipulation. That dark instigator was Mantharā, an elderly hunchbacked maidservant of Kaikeyī. This spinster-schemester wanted to maintain at all costs her privileged position in the royal palace as the favorite maidservant of the king's favorite queen. She feared that if Rāma became the king, his mother would become the foremost dowager and Kaikeyī would be relegated to the position of just another member in the royal family. This would downgrade Mantharā to the level of just another maidservant. Mantharā's hunchback had sometimes made her the butt of jokes, which she bitterly resented. Such banter had stopped with her ascension to a prominent position in the royal staff. Dreading a return to a position of insignificance and scorn, she decided to use her wiles on Kaikeyī and somehow stop the transfer of power.

When Mantharā informed Kaikeyī about Rāma's upcoming succession, Kaikeyī became joyful and gifted her maidservant a jewel necklace for bringing such good news. But Mantharā hurled the necklace on the ground and called her mistress a naïve fool for not seeing what was happening. She said that the haste with which the succession ceremony was being executed, especially during the absence of Bharata, pointed to a conspiracy for depriving the absent prince of power. Actually, Bharata's absence at that time was simply a happenstance. Moreover, Bharata, being the youngest son, had no claim to the throne, which was meant to go by primogeniture to the oldest son, Rāma.

Such facts notwithstanding, Mantharā exploited the coincidence of Bharata's absence to sow a seed of suspicion in Kaikeyī's heart. And then she watered that seed well into the night with a dystopian tale spun from her imagination: A vindictive Kauśalyā would have Kaikeyī reduced to a veritable serving maid; and a despotic Rāma would have Bharata incarcerated, if not executed.

By the end of Mantharā's diatribe, Kaikeyī was ready to do anything to stop the "conspiracy." Seeing her readiness, her maid suggested that she use an old promise by the king that he would grant her two wishes. Kaikeyī soon agreed to ask that first, Bharata be designated as the royal heir, and second, that Rāma be exiled to the forest for fourteen years. Mantharā anticipated that the king would vehemently oppose his beloved son's banishment. So she warned Kaikeyī to not go soft on that demand – only when Rāma was outside the kingdom and indeed outside any position of political power would Bharata be able to consolidate his hold on the throne.

GLOSSARY with AUDIO

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Krishna.com/glossary

Hard Heart Breaks Hearts

What followed was a collision between Kaikeyī's heart and Daśaratha's heart. While the king's heart was soft at the prospect of the coronation, his queen's heart had become harder than stone by her believing the conspiracy theory. When their hearts collided, the impact left the king heartbroken.

Late in the night, Daśaratha finished overseeing the arrangements for the next day's ceremony. Wanting to share his joy with his favorite queen, he went to her palace. When she reminded him of his past promise, he unsuspectingly reiterated his commitment to honor it. But when he heard her two wishes, he was petrified and collapsed in a swoon. On returning to consciousness, he realized that the nightmare was real. He strove feverishly to deter his wife from her ruthless resolve. Finally, he broke down into piteous tears and fell begging at her feet – both actions utterly uncharacteristic of a monarch. Yet Kaikeyī remained unmoved by her husband's desperate pleas.

Being bound by his word of honor, the king was forced to grant her wishes. But being horrified to see that his loving wife had become an unfeeling ogress, he disowned her. In a voice choked with agony and fury, he declared that with the granting of her wishes, his obligation to her was over, as was his relationship with her.

Despite hearing such a dreadful declaration, Kaikeyī still remained unrelenting. Her heart had become so cold and hard that it had no room left for anything except her scheme: No room for any conjugal affection for her husband. No room for any maternal affection for her stepson Rāma, who accepted the grievous diktat against him with disarming grace. No room for feminine concern for her daughter-in-law Sītā, who had to don rough tree-bark to join her husband in His exile. No room for respect for the venerable royal priest Vasiṣṭha, who implored her to desist from her nefarious plan. And no room for fear of public censure as the shocked courtiers and citizens condemned her.

After Rāma departed for the forest, the aggrieved Daśaratha found separation from Him unbearable. Even more agonizing was the thought that he himself had sentenced his son to exile. This sentence was reserved for the worst of criminals, being just one level below execution. And he had meted out that brutal sentence to one who had done no wrong, to one whom he should have protected, to one who had been born from his own blood. Crushed by anguish, Daśaratha's broken heart broke down totally – he breathed his last. The whole kingdom sank into gloom at this double loss of both their cherished prince and their revered monarch.

The Imaginary Bharata Versus the Real Bharata

Mantharā had exploited the fissures between co-wives to set off a catastrophic earthquake. That quake had now given rise to a tsunami that inundated the whole of Ayodhya with agony. Yet not one drop of that ocean touched Kaikeyī's heart. Her transmogrification from wise, kind, and gentle to foolish, cruel, and harsh is astonishing.

Given that she was not innately evil, how did she justify to herself her horrendous actions? By masking them in the garb of vigilant maternal concern. She imagined that she was doing all this for her son Bharata, who, being absent, couldn't protect his interests. She believed her maternal rationalization so completely that nothing else mattered to her – no one's words, emotions, or actions could dent her resolve. Yet her justification couldn't but crumble to powder when debunked by the very person it claimed to defend: Bharata.

Kaikeyī's son had anxiously hastened to Ayodhya, being summoned by Vasiṣṭha, who was officiating as the provisional head of state. On arriving in Ayodhya, Bharata saw the once cheery city looking dreary, like a ghost town. Feeling deep misgivings, he rushed to his mother's chambers, expecting to meet both his parents there. On seeing his mother, he offered her his respects and enquired about his father's well-being. Kaikeyī recounted her own version of events, stressing how she had done so much to protect Bharata's right to the kingdom.

Bharata was too sharp to fall for such spin doctoring. Hearing about his father's demise and his brother's exile left him shaken. Hearing that his own mother had caused these calamities left him shattered. Hearing her claiming that she had done all this for his sake left him sickened. He found his mother's words so revolting that he felt sorely tempted to violate the *kṣatriya* code that one should not raise one's hand against a woman. Somehow checking himself, he poured his fury out in words. Castigating his unrepentant mother, he deemed her an evil witch born for the destruction of their dynasty.

Kaikeyī heard her son's denunciation with disbelief and dismay. She had imagined a Bharata who lauded her actions. When the real Bharata condemned those very actions, she realized to her horror that the Bharata who lauded her was nothing more than her imagination. As that imaginary Bharata died a quick death, so did her rationalization. And the monstrosity of what she had done hit her with the force of a thousand thunderbolts. She repented fervently, begging for Bharata's forgiveness. She even went with him to the forest to second his request that Rāma return and reclaim the throne. But it was too late – the juggernaut had already gained a fearsome momentum and nothing, not even its first pusher, could stop it.

Kaikeyī went with Bharata to the forest to second his request that Rāma return to reclaim the throne. But it was too late.

How did Kaikeyī become so misled? By a double blunder: she believed uncritically whatever Mantharā told her, and she didn't seek any second opinion. She let herself be so persuaded by just one person's view that she rejected everyone else's advice.

Don't Just Talk About Others – Talk with Others

As Kaikeyī had her Mantharā, we too may have people who seem to be our well-wishers but who end up coming between us and our actual well-wishers. Meddling relatives come between affectionate couples. Envious colleagues come between a team member and a team leader. By drawing an imaginary line between unconnected events and planting unwarranted suspicions in our heart, such disinformers may paint the grim picture that we will soon be betrayed. Once our paranoia is triggered, we may end up becoming the betrayer, as Kaikeyī did.

When someone casts an aspersion

on a loved one, rather than believing the accuser, we need to give the accused a chance to respond. A common blunder is to talk about people rather than with people. If Kaikeyī had talked with Daśaratha as soon as the doubt had risen in her mind, things would have been amicably clarified and resolved. But instead of talking with Daśaratha, she talked about Daśaratha with Mantharā. Or rather, she let Mantharā talk about him to her. And because Kaikeyī heard uncritically from Mantharā, Kaikeyī's suspicion became a conviction. And with that conviction, she convicted Daśaratha in the court of her heart without giving him any chance to defend himself. She became the plaintiff, the plaintiff's lawyer, the judge, and the jury all rolled into one. Actually, the reality was worse – she was just a bystander persuaded to become a plaintiff and then give power of attorney to Mantharā. And Mantharā, acting as the plaintiff's lawyer, the judge, and the jury, found Daśaratha guilty – a verdict Kaikeyī naively accepted.

Devotional remembrance of Kṛṣṇa provides a higher inner fulfillment that empowers us to say no to lower temptations.

While it is easy to condemn Mantharā and even Kaikeyī, it is more helpful to introspect about times when we ourselves might have acted like them, and how we could have avoided or at least minimized conflicts by seeking clarifications.

A note of caution: Clarifications need to be sought in a nonaccusatory way. If others don't have any inkling of where we are coming from, then just voicing the suspicion may hurt them grievously. So, instead of making a value judgment of any kind, we can just present facts and seek explanations. If Kaikeyī had gently asked Daśaratha why he was appointing his successor so hastily in the absence of Bharata, Daśaratha would have explained the jolting reminders of his mortality. And Kaikeyī's apprehensions would have been allayed without her needing to even voice them, let alone act on them. In fact, hearing his concern might well have brought her closer to him at a spiritual level as they prepared together to accept the retired order of *vānaprastha*.

But instead of seeking clarification, Kaikeyī presumed Daśaratha's motivation, thereby bringing a calamity on the dynasty and the kingdom. Instead of unwittingly bringing a similar calamity on our relationships, we can seek clarification by objectively presenting facts and gently soliciting explanations.

Spiritual Empowerment

To protect ourselves from disinformation, we need to strengthen our intellectual and ethical muscles. With stronger intellects, we can penetrate to the actual beyond the apparent, thereby discerning the disingenuousness in disinformation. With better ethical muscles, we can resist the promises of quick pleasure that disinformationists dangle to make us lower our guard.

The process of *bhakti-yoga* helps us strengthen both these muscles. Devotional study of scripture sharpens our discerning power and hones our intellectual muscles. Devotional remembrance of Kṛṣṇa provides a higher inner fulfillment that empowers us to say no to lower temptations.

Unfortunately, disinformation is so pervasive that it can distort our perception of *bhakti-yoga* too. With a barrage of half-truths and untruths about spirituality and spiritual organizations, disinformation can assault our sacred faith. We can best protect our faith by entirely avoiding such anti-devotional propagandists. But if we somehow hear from them, we shouldn't let their opinions determine our spiritual decisions. By seeking clarification from trustworthy spiritual mentors, we can get a balanced understanding that protects our faith in *bhakti's* potency.

Disinformation threatens us not just externally (from others) but also internally (from our own mind). If we compare Ayodhya with our heart, then Mantharā is like the mind. The mind comes up with the deadly duo of doubt and desire: doubt paralyzes our devotion, and desire aggravates our worldly infatuation. Being misled by the mind, we become like Kaikeyī and exile the Lord from our heart.

To counter the mind's insinuations, we need to meticulously avoid the two mistakes Kaikeyī made. First, we need to avoid hearing the mind uncritically. Unfortunately, the mind is always with us and it always has the opportunity to spin its self-serving yarn – so, we need to be constantly vigilant. Second, if the mind's persuasion starts swaying us from our moral and spiritual principles, we need to counter it with the enlightening voices of *guru-sādhu-śāstra*. We can take both these precautions by conscientiously engaging ourselves in devotional service. By such absorbing spiritual engagement, we will preempt the mind's misleading stratagems and instead be led by timeless wisdom towards our all-round well-being.

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ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA: OUR FOUNDER-ĀCĀRYA

Fictional Prabhupādas

While developing a personal relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda, it is important to dispel impersonal and sentimental misconceptions we may have about him.

by Sureśvara Dāsa

To honor the fiftieth anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's incorporation of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, BTG presents Part Nine of a ten-part series celebrating Śrīla Prabhupāda's unique, transcendental position in ISKCON, as well as every follower's foundational relationship with him.

STUDYING Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings without studying his life and how he lived and applied those teachings is impersonal. And becoming attached to Prabhupāda's personality without studying and following his teachings is sentimental. Both approaches give us a "fictional Prabhupāda" we should avoid. Let's look at some examples – some obvious, some not.

IMPERSONAL FICTIONS

"Prabhupāda is God"

Strange as it sounds, this fiction once possessed some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's leading disciples. It happened during the summer of 1970.

That spring Prabhupāda had countered a threat to his movement. While expanding Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Americas and Europe, he was meeting resistance in India.

Some inimical swamis were trying to prevent ISKCON from acquiring land in Mayapur, the birthplace of Lord Caitanya.[1] Worse, they were spreading a minimized view of Prabhupāda, which was affecting the faith of some of his leading disciples in America.

To counter the threat, Śrīla Prabhupāda formed a Governing Body Commission of trusted leaders, whom he would train to manage the movement's worldwide preaching in his absence.[2] After correcting the misled leaders, he deployed four of them as *sannyāsīs*,[3] to travel and preach with full faith in guru and Kṛṣṇa.

As the young renunciants toured ISKCON America that summer, the gravity of their offense to Prabhupāda weighed on them. Mortified at how they had been minimizing his position, they began to maximize him, even deify him, citing scriptural references that the spiritual master is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa Himself.

In late August the four traveled to New Vrindaban,[4] West Virginia, for the Janmāṣṭamī/Vyāsa-pūjā festivals[5] and the largest gathering of ISKCON devotees to date. The *sannyāsīs'* apocalyptic message: Prabhupāda is God, Kṛṣṇa, and because we haven't recognized him, he has rejected us and gone back to India. Without understanding that Prabhupāda is God, our chanting is useless.

Their preaching so disturbed the devotees that the Governing Body phoned Prabhupāda for guidance. Prabhupāda thundered his reply: "They have committed the greatest offense. There is only one thing worse than underestimating the guru – overestimating the guru. They have said I am God. Therefore, if I am God, they also can become God. This is impersonalism." (*Rādhā-Dāmodara Vilāsa I*, Eleventh Wave: "New Vrindavan Shakedown." From author Vaiyāsakī Dāsa's interview with Madhudviṣa Dāsa)

Banishing the offenders from his Society, Prabhupāda said they could return if they separately opened centers, inspired people to take up devotional service, and preached the truth: the spiritual master is not God. God is God. The genuine spiritual master is God's authorized representative. Any so-called spiritual master who says he's God is as good as a dog.

End of fiction.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is certainly ISKCON. At the same time, everything in ISKCON doesn't equal Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"ISKCON is Prabhupāda"

Although less obvious than the previous fiction, the giveaway is *is*. To equate ISKCON in all respects with Śrīla Prabhupāda repeats the impersonal flaw of oneness without difference. Prabhupāda's oft-quoted statement on the subject is flawless: "ISKCON is my body." Although this quotation was never recorded, reliable earwitness testimony is abundant, and the following letter excerpt says the same thing: "You are all my limbs of my body. Unless you cooperate, my life will be useless." (Letter to Brahmānanda Dāsa, 17 July 1968)

Indeed, whenever Prabhupāda's followers don't cooperate, a part of his ISKCON body falls ill. And if the noncooperation becomes systemic, all of ISKCON falls ill. The unfailing cure: re-immersion in Prabhupāda's life, teachings, mood, and mission, especially his admonition to cooperate.

Interestingly, Prabhupāda also rejected as material this fiction's inverse – "Prabhupāda is ISKCON": "Suppose if I say, 'I am everything in this, my institution,' does it mean I have lost my personality? No, no . . . If somebody says that 'Bhaktivedanta Swami is everything,' does it mean I have lost my personality? That is material understanding." (Conversation with college students, London, 11 July 1973)

As ISKCON's founder-*ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda is certainly ISKCON. At the same time, everything in ISKCON doesn't equal Śrīla Prabhupāda, his Society's life and soul. As the philosopher Emerson once observed, "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man."

"The Governing Body Commission is Prabhupāda"

This fiction reflects an impersonal understanding of the first item Śrīla Prabhupāda declared in his will: "The Governing Body Commission (GBC) will be the ultimate managing authority of the entire International Society for Krishna Consciousness." (Declaration of Will, 4 June 1977)

The fiction lies in the way Prabhupāda's GBC trainees understood his faith in their collective capacity to manage, a faith he several times expressed. Sometime after he signed the will, for instance, Prabhupāda called for his personal secretary in the middle of the night. The secretary's diary discloses what happened next:

> He could not sleep; thinking of the will had kept him up. "Amongst the GBC, have you selected one after me who will succeed?" I replied that we felt that we should manage together as a group, that none of us was more qualified than the others. "Yes, each of you can be *ācārya* of your zone." (*TKG's Diary: Prabhupāda's Final Days*, entry for 27 June 1977)

Ācārya, but not the founder-*ācārya* – a vital distinction it would take the Governing Body years to assert.

After Prabhupāda's passing, regional imitations of his pivotal position threatened to turn ISKCON's zones into sectarian camps. The offenses devastated many. While the imitation was abating, the GBC began to reflect on Prabhupāda's mandate for the Body. In March 2013 the GBC published its matured realization about Prabhupāda's will that the Governing Body Commission be the Society's "ultimate managing authority":

> When we use the word "authority" in the context of the managerial structure, we do not mean an absolute, infallible authority – such as the authority of scripture – but the mandate to organize the preaching movement so that it is aligned with the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda. (*Harmonizing ISKCON's Lines of Authority*, GBC policy paper, March 2013)

In sum, "The GBC is Prabhupāda" is a fiction because it is incomplete, seeing the oneness but ignoring the difference between Śrīla Prabhupāda and his managerial body, the Governing Body Commission.

"Prabhupāda is the guru only of his initiated disciples"

A hangover from ISKCON's "zonal-*ācārya*" era, this impersonal fiction arose from ignorance of the founder-*ācārya's* personal, foundational role in the lives of all generations of his followers.

In 1994, as Śrīla Prabhupāda's Centennial year was approaching, the GBC began to present a deeper understanding of Prabhupāda's position by passing the first of several founder-*ācārya* resolutions. The resolution began as follows: "Śrīla Prabhupāda is the foundational *śikṣā-guru*[6] for all ISKCON devotees because he has realized and presented the teachings of the previous *ācāryas* of the Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya*[7] appropriately for the modern age." (1994 GBC Resolution No. 35, "The Founder-Ācārya Statement")

At ISKCON Mayapur, some five months after this resolution was passed, the day of Prabhupāda's Vyāsa-pūjā arrived. As the sun rose outside the temple, a Prabhupāda initiate was chanting on his beads when he noticed a young devotee had stopped chanting to have a morning snack. Tactfully, he approached the young man.

"Oh, Prabhu,[8] maybe you didn't know. We're fasting till noon today for Śrīla Prabhupāda's Vyāsa-pūjā."

Squinting into the sun, the snacker was blunt: "You say that because Prabhupāda is your spiritual master; he's not my spiritual master." And with that he went back to his snack.

Incredulous, the Prabhupāda initiate didn't know what to say, so he just walked away. "I guess no one told him about that founder-*ācārya* resolution," he pondered. "To give meaning to its legislation, our Governing Body needs to follow up with education."

Fortunately that's happening now, so to continue our study, we'll identify and dispel some sentimental fictions about Śrīla Prabhupāda.

ISKCON Berkeley, 1975. Śrīla Prabhupāda is surrounded by loving disciples, many of whom have traveled to see him and attend the annual San Francisco Rathayātrā festival.

SENTIMENTAL FICTIONS

"Illusory Prabhupāda"

This fiction draws its title from ISKCON educator Bhūrijana Dāsa's account of what happened while he and his wife, Jagatāriṇī Dāsī, were pioneering Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Hong Kong.

To attract Chinese people to Kṛṣṇa in the early 1970s, Prabhupāda had allowed Bhūrijana and Jagatāriṇī to adjust their appearance and dress. As guests started coming to their programs, more adjustments followed – in their food, music, mood, and decor – which in turn attracted more guests. The Chinese were becoming devotees.

As inspirational as Prabhupāda's personal presence was, his writings speak of a deeper intimacy by following his instructions.

As they adapted their outreach, however, Bhūrijana and his wife also began to neglect their spiritual practices. Resting and rising later, they were chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa without the support and focus the quiet, early morning hours provide. They thought themselves too busy to study Prabhupāda's books, and material desires began to reenter their hearts. But flush with success, they imagined they still had Prabhupāda's approval.

Then an aerogram arrived. In two weeks Prabhupāda would be arriving in Hong Kong, his secretary wrote, so get ready.

By the time Prabhupāda arrived, Bhūrijana and Jagatāriṇī had prepared a beautiful rose garland and arranged a fancy hotel room. After picking him up in a Rolls Royce, they expressed to Prabhupāda how wonderful it was to see him again.

Turning to Bhūrijana, Prabhupāda was grave: "What is your morning program?"

"Well, Prabhupāda, we don't really have so many guests coming in the morning right now, so we usually don't have much of a morning program."

Prabhupāda disapproved.

"Guests may or may not be coming, but why don't you have a morning program? Whose disciple are you?"

Shaken awake, Bhūrijana realized he had become a disciple of illusion.

> I had been imagining a Prabhupāda that allowed a compromise of purity and Kṛṣṇa conscious practices. When I was suddenly confronted by the real Prabhupāda, the illusory Prabhupāda dissolved like mist after sunrise. Prabhupāda, as he himself said, was "90% liberal," but that other 10% was strict. (Bhūrijana Dāsa, *My Glorious Master*)

Despite his disciples' preaching success, Prabhupāda knew if they continued to neglect their spiritual practices, they would gradually succumb to the Lord's illusory energy. To avoid becoming illusory disciples of an "illusory Prabhupāda," we need to continue living in the clear light of his protective instructions.

"Figurehead Prabhupāda"

Not long ago Queen Elizabeth II became England's longest-serving monarch. And perhaps the most popular one too, as the adoring crowds on her jubilee tours have attested. Yet the queen has no real authority over her people, no parliamentary power like the prime minister. Elizabeth's influence is purely sentimental because, like almost all monarchs today, she is a figurehead.

By contrast, when Prabhupāda toured ISKCON as the founder-*ācārya*, he wielded absolute authority over his disciples. He did this by the transcendental knowledge he revealed as well as his own endearing example of pure devotional service. Keen to see his knowledge and example inspire all generations of his followers, Prabhupāda took steps to protect his foundational role in ISKCON. One step was the introduction of his daily *guru-pūjā*.[9]

In April 1974 after his morning walk on Bombay's Juhu Beach, Prabhupāda went up to the temple as usual to offer his respects to the deities.[10] At that time the devotees would offer flowers both to the deities and to Prabhupāda. But this morning, in plain view of the deities, Prabhupāda sat on his dais to receive full worship with his disciples singing *Śrī Guru-vandana*, a traditional Bengali song glorifying the guru.

The song praises pure service to the guru as the way to obtain the full mercy of God. Since Prabhupāda was the only guru in ISKCON when he introduced the hymn, his direct disciples had yet to witness its full purport. Today, as successive generations of gurus and disciples come together daily to sing to Prabhupāda, the significance of his position as the *jagat-guru*[11] continues to grow. Far from being a mere figurehead without real presence in the hearts and minds of his sincere followers, Prabhupāda lives in the core of their very being. *Janme janme prabhu sei*: "He is my lord, birth after birth."

Only failure to follow Prabhupāda's teachings will leave us with a sentimental, "Figurehead Prabhupāda," akin to the next despairing fiction.

"Gone-Forever Prabhupāda"

On July 16, 1975, at a packed press conference in Berkeley, California, a reporter challenged Prabhupāda: "What will happen to the movement when you die?"

"I will never die," Prabhupāda replied. "I shall live in my books, and you will utilize."

If Prabhupāda's reply sounded defiant, it was also an invitation. To know Kṛṣṇa and transcend death, anyone could read and use the knowledge he was translating and explaining. Especially his followers, who rested as Prabhupāda wrote through the night. The problem, he would chide them, is that they didn't read his books, where he was making himself most available.

As inspirational as Prabhupāda's personal presence was, his writings speak of a deeper intimacy by following his instructions. In fact, this was his experience while executing the order of his own spiritual master. Although he was only with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta perhaps a half dozen times, he always felt him to be right by his side: "There is no difference between the spiritual master's instructions and the spiritual master himself. In his absence, therefore, his words of direction should be the pride of the disciple." (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi* 1.35, Purport)

Although Prabhupāda's form and initiations were certainly divine, it is his everlasting instructions that sustain us over time. "He lives forever by his divine instructions, and the follower lives with him."[12] "Living still in sound,"[13] Prabhupāda will now dispel one more forever fiction.

*"*Dīkṣā-guru *Forever Prabhupāda"*

In the 1980s this sentimental fiction arose to challenge the zonal *ācāryas* in ISKCON who were imitating the position of the founder-*ācārya*. I call this imitation FAD, the Founder-*Ācārya* Disease, which blocked devotees' foundational relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. But to counter that abuse by saying the founder-*ācārya* appointed himself as everyone's perpetual *dīkṣā-guru* betrays ignorance of Prabhupāda's consistent teachings.

"Keep trained up very rigidly and then you are a bona fide Guru, and you can accept disciples on the same principle. But as a matter of etiquette it is the custom that during the lifetime of your spiritual master you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession. I want to see my disciples become bona fide Spiritual Master and spread Krishna consciousness very widely, that will make me and Krishna very happy." (Letter to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, 2 December 1975)

Further: "Because people are in darkness, we require many millions of gurus to enlighten them. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission is, He said, that 'Every one of you become guru.' [If you say,] 'But I have no qualification. How can I become guru?' There is no need of qualification. 'Still I can become guru?' Yes. 'How?' Whomever you meet, you simply instruct what Kṛṣṇa has said. That's all. You become guru." (Lecture, 21 May 1976, Honolulu)

Since Prabhupāda and Lord Caitanya want everyone to qualify themselves as spiritual masters, avoiding FAD, or even the pride of becoming a regular guru, may seem difficult. In the following lecture excerpt, Prabhupāda reveals the service attitude of a true spiritual master:

"A spiritual master takes his disciples as his spiritual master. That is the position. He thinks that 'Kṛṣṇa has sent me so many spiritual masters.' He does not think himself as spiritual master. He thinks himself their servant. Because they have to be trained. Kṛṣṇa has appointed him to train them. Therefore he thinks himself as servant of the disciples. This is the position." (Lecture, 23 October 1972, Vrindavan)

Full immersion in our founder-*ācārya's* life, teachings, mood, and mission is the best prevention for FAD, or any "guru complex." And when FAD is absent, so is the sentimental fiction it spawns, "*Dīkṣā-guru* Forever Prabhupāda."

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NOTES

1. Mayapur, in West Bengal, India, is the birthplace of Lord Caitanya, Kṛṣṇa's "Golden Avatar."
2. *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, Chapter 31: "A Threat Against ISKCON."

(*please turn to page 60*)

ARE WE BOUND OR FREE?

A discussion on the options for the soul under the influence of Kṛṣṇa's material energy.

by Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna: Detail from a painting by Parīkṣit Dāsa. Chain and background: ©iStockphoto.com | BsWei. Collage: Yamarāja Dāsa.

A CONTROVERSY arose during a Sunday discussion at ISKCON's Saranagati Village, in British Columbia, Canada. Some devotees quoted a famous *Bhagavad-gītā* verse (3.27) where Kṛṣṇa says, "The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of nature [goodness, passion, and ignorance]."

In other words, they said, although a person may think he or she is making choices, in fact those "choices" are chosen and that "freedom" is an illusion. We're bound.

Other devotees read from another section of the *Gītā* where Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "If one wants, he can develop, by practice, the mode of goodness

After speaking the* Bhagavad-gītā, *Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, "Deliberate on this fully, and then do what you wish to do."

and thus defeat the modes of ignorance and passion. One can similarly develop the mode of passion and defeat goodness and ignorance. Or one can develop the mode of ignorance and defeat goodness and passion. Although there are these three modes of nature, if one is determined he can be blessed by the mode of goodness." (*Gītā* 14.10, Purport)

In other words, they said, we're not bound, because according to our desires, we choose how to act.

Prabhupāda's purports to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* contain similar apparently contradictory statements: "The conditioned soul is forced to act under the pressure of the modes of material nature. The living entity has no independence." (*Bhāg*. 3.27.2, Purport) And on the other side: "One has to act in such a way that in spite of being in the material nature he is not affected by contamination." (*Bhāg*. 3.27.21, Purport)

So, are we forced to act by material nature, or do we freely choose how we act?

The answer is multifaceted.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that spirit is independent, or free, and matter is dependent, or bound. (*Life Comes from Life*, Chapter 8) In this world, all living things are spiritual beings – spirit souls – encased in a material body. Lower species are completely controlled by the body they're in and so, by God's arrangement, are not responsible for their acts: they don't incur karma. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Animals, birds, reptiles, and other lower life forms strictly adhere to the laws of nature; therefore there is no question of sin for them, nor are the Vedic instructions meant for them. Human life alone is a life of responsibility." (*Śrī Īśopaniṣad*, Mantra 1, Purport)

Kṛṣṇa gifts humans with intelligence, and according to Śrīla Madhvācārya, persons above the age of fourteen are considered capable of distinguishing between good and bad and are thus culpable for their pious or sinful actions. (*Bhāg*. 11.21.16, Purport) If we, whether devotees or nondevotees, are responsible for our acts, then it is only fair and logical that we are independently choosing what those acts will be. In other words, if we were forced to act, as the lower species are, then the law of karma would be unjust – we would be punished for doing what's beyond our control.

Material nature simply facilitates our actions and awards us the fruits of our pious and impious material activities.

If our actions were impelled by Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa would be responsible for our good and bad actions. By making some of us to do good action, resulting in enjoyment, and some do bad, resulting in suffering, Kṛṣṇa would be partial and cruel. And if He were responsible for our actions, the reward or punishment for them should go to Him.

Although Kṛṣṇa is the supreme controller and the ultimate doer, He does not accept responsibility for what happens to us. "The Supreme Lord does not assume anyone's sinful or pious activities." (*Gītā* 5.15)

If material nature forced us to act, it would be responsible for our actions – and their reactions. But material nature is inert matter. It has no consciousness; it simply facilitates our actions and awards us the fruits of our pious and impious material activities. Material nature is not responsible for what we do.

Kṛṣṇa, the cause of all causes, reciprocates our desires by allowing material nature to fulfill them. Although Kṛṣṇa has His own desires for us – He wants us to return to Him – He and material nature, remaining neutral, fulfill our desires. What we desire is our responsibility. According to our desires material nature allows us to act and then rewards or punishes us for our actions. So, regarding our desires, we are the doers. Regarding the facilitation and fruition of our desires, material nature is the doer (this validates *Bhagavad-gītā* 3.27). And Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate sanctioner.

In the purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.87.25, Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples write:

> Śrīla Vyāsadeva refutes this idea [that the soul is inactive] in the section of the *Vedānta-sūtra* (2.3.31–39) that begins, *kartā śāstrārtha-vattvāt*: "The *jīva* soul must be a performer of actions, because the injunctions of scripture must have some purpose." Ācārya Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, in his *Govinda-bhāṣya*, explains: "The *jīva*, not the modes of nature, is the doer. Why? Because the injunctions of scripture must have some purpose (*śāstrārtha-vattvāt*). For example, such scriptural injunctions as *svarga-kāmo yajeta* ('One who desires to attain to heaven should perform ritual sacrifice') and *ātmānam eva lokam upāsīta* (*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.15: 'One should worship with the aim of attaining the spiritual kingdom') are meaningful only if a conscious doer exists. If the modes of nature were the doer, these statements would serve no purpose. After all, scriptural injunctions engage the living entity in performing prescribed actions by convincing him that he can act to bring about certain enjoyable results. Such a mentality cannot be aroused in the inert modes of nature."

As adult human beings, we are responsible for what we desire. That means we have the ability – the freedom – to choose our desires, whether pious or impious. One student works hard and does well; another with equally good intelligence wastes his time and fails. One manager is friendly, another tyrannical. These are choices we, as individuals, make. As a result we individually reap the good and bad consequences of our choices.

The Plot Thickens

There is more to it, however, than this. One may ask, why does one student choose to be lazy, one manager to be tyrannical?

Life is a continuum of birth, death, and rebirth. The body and circumstances we're in now are not accidents but the results of our actions in previous lives. If in previous lives we ignored scriptural principles and instead tried to control and enjoy this material world, then in this life we will find ourselves proportionately more bound by the modes of material nature that govern this world. The God-given freedom we have as a spiritual being will be more covered. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, "When you are placed into the sea, you have no control. You move according to the waves. This means that there is a power that is controlling you. However, if you put yourself in better circumstances, you will be able to control." (*The Quest for Enlightenment*, Chapter 6) Thus the more our activities contradict our identity as spiritual beings, the more we're bound by the forces of material nature – goodness, passion, and ignorance.

Due to complex karmic reactions, a student is intelligent but lazy, a manager is qualified but demonic. They are awash in the sea, pushed by its waves of passion and ignorance. Yet, they are not helpless. Although limited, they still have freedom. Otherwise, the reactions they accrue for their actions – their karma – would be unjust. And there is no injustice in Kṛṣṇa's creation. This means the lazy student, the ogre manager have the innate free will to overcome their attitudes. The student can become industrious, the manager compassionate. No doubt this change is difficult and takes determination, but it's not impossible. It can be done and has been. And it's expected. We are meant to improve.

Devotees of Kṛṣṇa are not exempt from the influence of the three modes of material nature. Kapiladeva, the son of Devahūti, explains:

> There are multifarious paths of devotional service in terms of the different qualities of the executor. Devotional service executed by a person who is envious, proud, violent, and angry, and who is a separatist, is considered to be in the mode of darkness. The worship of Deities in the temple by a separatist, with a motive for material enjoyment, fame, and opulence, is devotion in the mode of passion. When a devotee worships the Supreme Personality of Godhead and offers the results of his activities in order to free himself from the inebrieties of fruitive activities, his devotion is in the mode of goodness. (*Bhāg*. 3.29.7–10)

This is not to say, however, that devotees and nondevotees are the same, for Kṛṣṇa favors His devotees. He preserves what they have, carries what they lack, gives them the understanding by which they can come to Him, and swiftly delivers them from the ocean of birth and death. "When one desires Kṛṣṇa, the Lord takes special care and encourages one to desire in such a way that one can attain to Him and be eternally happy." (*Gītā* 5.15, Purport)

Every one of us has some independence to chalk out the plan of our life. We are not helpless, and nothing is stereotyped. We can change our habits by good or bad association, and we need to become intelligent enough to discriminate between good and bad. We're the cause of our bondage. "The living entity is the cause of the various sufferings and enjoyments in this world." (*Gītā* 13.21)

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains:

> Because he is a living soul, he has the capacity to desire by his free will. Such desire is fulfilled only by the omnipotent Lord. And so, when the living entity is bewildered

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in his desires, the Lord allows him to fulfill those desires, but the Lord is never responsible for the actions and reactions of the particular situation which may be desired. Being in a bewildered condition, therefore, the embodied soul identifies himself with the circumstantial material body and becomes subjected to the temporary misery and happiness of life. (*Gītā* 5.15, Purport)

But we can also desire freedom and eternal happiness.

Transcending the Mode of Goodness

We humans are expected to be sane and to follow scriptural regulations to gradually elevate our consciousness. We cannot annihilate our desires, but we can transform them. In a letter, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote:

> You cannot kill the human propensities, but they can be changed for higher purposes. You [spoke] of annihilation of desire, or *vāsanā*. But you can think on it very wisely if *vāsanā* can be stopped at all. No. *Vāsanā* can never be stopped. The *vāsanā* is an eternal function of the soul, and as the soul is eternal, or *sanātana*, so also is the *vāsanā*. Therefore *vāsanā* can be changed only from one object to another. The mind is always a thinking and feeling organ. It does not matter what [it thinks] but it is a fact that it thinks. I am sure that you cannot probably put the mind completely at rest without thinking something. So the quality of thinking, feeling, and willing has to be changed but we may not attempt to kill the mind altogether. That is an impossible fact because the mind acts even after the so-called death or after the annihilation of the material body. (Letter to Ved Prakashji, undated)

We humans are expected to be sane and to follow scriptural regulations to gradually elevate our consciousness.

We can pray to Kṛṣṇa to purify our desires. In the words of the great *ācārya* Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura,

> *kanaka-kāmini-lobha,*
> *pratiṣṭhā-vāsanā*
> *chāḍāiyā śodha more, e mora*
> *prārthanā*

"To You I earnestly pray that You reform my greed for wealth and women and my yearning for name and position." (*Jaiva-dharma*, Chapter 5)

In his song "Gopīnātha," Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura also fervently prays:

> O Gopīnātha, I can no longer tolerate the pain of ignorance and the cycle of repeated births and deaths.
>
> O Gopīnātha, I am a confirmed servant of lust. Worldly desires are awakening in my heart, and thus the noose of fruitive work is beginning to tighten.
>
> O Gopīnātha, when will I wake up and cast this enemy of lust far away, and when will You manifest Yourself in my heart?
>
> O Gopīnātha, I am Your devotee, but because I abandoned You and thus forgot my real treasure, I have worshiped this mundane world.

When we understand the three modes of nature, their influence on us, and their ultimate controller, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and when we act according to His instructions, we become gradually free of the influence of the material modes. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "By refraining from a particular sinful or materialistic activity, one becomes freed from its bondage." (*Bhāg.* 11.21.18) According to how covered we are by Kṛṣṇa's external, material energy, we're that much bound. Thus the apparently contrary statements above are all valid.

Śrīla Prabhupāda assures us that if we're enthusiastic, patient, and determined to follow the process of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, not only can we be blessed by the mode of goodness but we can also transcend goodness and overcome the effects of karma. Then all the actions and reactions of our past activities will be nullified. In Kṛṣṇa's words, "One who engages in full devotional service, unfailing in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman." (*Gītā* 14.26) And, "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear." (*Gītā* 18.66)

Simply by hearing about Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, we will lose our longtime desire to control and enjoy this world, and as we gradually reduce our desire to dominate, we will proportionately enjoy spiritual happiness. A Vedic mantra says that as we associate with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, we proportionately relish our eternal blissful life.

So, eternal blissful life can be ours if we desire and pray for it. "When will Nityānanda bestow His causeless mercy upon me so that my desire for material enjoyment will become very insignificant? When will that time come?" (Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura, *Lālasāmayī Prārthanā* 2). By the causeless mercy of our transcendental superiors, our desires will no longer be material, but spiritual. At that time the modes of goodness, passion, and ignorance will release their ironlike grip on us. We'll be completely free.

Viśākhā Devī Dāsī has been writing for BTG since 1973. Visit her website at our-spiritual-journey.com.

Austerity And Pleasure

Managing Our Sexuality While Waiting for Transcendence

The practices of bhakti-yoga *can recover the pure eternal purpose of sexual desire.*

by Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī

BHAKTI-YOGA gives us the key to the origin of sexuality and its means of total fulfillment. Yoga literally means "union." *Bhakti* means loving service. *Bhakti-yoga*, therefore, means the loving union of the soul with the Supreme Soul. The soul's deepest desire is for this loving union.

Whenever the Lord is pleased in any way, He and His pleasure energy reciprocate. Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate masculine, and His pleasure energy is His feminine counterpart, Rādhārāṇī. When there is yoga, or union, of the Supreme Soul with His pleasure energy, this yoga also gives full enjoyment to all the minute spiritual parts (us) who facilitate it. The sacred sound *oṁ* shows this process, as it is a blend of the Sanskrit letters *a* (pronounced like the *u* in *but*), *u* (pronounced like the *u* in *push*) and *ṁ* (a resonant nasal sound like in the French word *bon*). The *a* indicates the Supreme Soul, the *u* His pleasure energy, and the *ṁ* individual souls like us. As illustration, the great devotee Hanumān aids the union of Rāma and Sītā, and in doing so feels continuously expanding pleasure himself.

The souls who refuse to exult in the Lord's pleasure pastimes envy His central position. The utmost expression of that foolish rebellion twists the natural and intrinsic pleasure seeking of the soul into what we know in the world as sexual desire. Mundane sexuality is, therefore, a perversion of a desire that exists in our original, spiritual bodies. For this reason, all attempts to abolish sexuality result in failure. We cannot kill desires that are part of our very self.

> When males and females touch each other's bodies, their lusty desires naturally awaken. It appears from this verse that there are similar

sensations in spiritual bodies. Both Lord Ananta and the women giving Him pleasure had spiritual bodies. Thus all sensations originally exist in the spiritual body. This is confirmed in the *Vedānta-sūtra: janmādy asya yataḥ*. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has commented in this connection that the word *ādi* means *ādi-rasa*, the original lusty feeling, which is born from the Supreme. However, spiritual lust and material lust are as completely different as gold and iron. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.25.5, Purport)

The desire for enjoyment is present both in Kṛṣṇa and in His parts and parcels, the living entities. In the spiritual world, such desires

One who tries to take the pleasures without the austerities will find those pleasures to be an empty shell only.

are also spiritual. No one should mistakenly consider such desires to be material. In the material world, if one is sexually inclined and enjoys sex life, he enjoys something temporary. His enjoyment vanishes after a few minutes. However, in the spiritual world the same enjoyment may be there, but it never vanishes. It is continuously enjoyed. In the spiritual world such sex pleasure appears to the enjoyer to be more and more relishable with each new feature. In the material world, however, sex enjoyment becomes distasteful after a few minutes only, and it is never permanent. (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 8.138, Purport)

The only ultimate cure for mundane sexuality – which entices us, embarrasses us, drives us, frustrates us, and provides us at best with fleeting, temporary, and decreasing pleasure – is to regain the original form of that pleasure through a union of love and service with our source, Kṛṣṇa. The process to achieve that is *bhakti-yoga*, which includes a variety of practices, the chief of which is to chant the names of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Rāma and Their pleasure energy, Hare. Because the names of the Lord and His energy are identical with them, the total yoga between the soul, the Lord, and the pleasure energy is accomplished as soon as a soul is immersed in that sound with a mood of dependent love and service.

Therefore, when chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, one feels great happiness on a platform higher than that of the mind and senses. As a practitioner gradually deepens in *bhakti-yoga*, all mundane sexual desires are transformed back into genuine spiritual love, *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

However, achieving the full purification necessary to return our original state of utmost bliss is generally a gradual process. Therefore, material sexual desires demand some outlet until they are fully back in their primal spiritual condition. The scriptures prescribe two righteous outlets that give the student of *bhakti-yoga* support along the route to transcendence.

Two Supports for Bhakti-yogīs

The astonishing beauty of each of these supports is how Kṛṣṇa uses the epitome of the soul's rebellion against Him – mundane sexuality – to bring that soul back to the spiritual bliss of yoga. Because Kṛṣṇa has linked material sexuality with reproduction, a human being who allows that link to remain intact is pulled to the path of sacrifice and dharma from which spiritual life is natural. In the *Gītā's* third and twelfth chapters, therefore, Kṛṣṇa recommends dutiful sacrifice and charity, even for those not yet conscious of their relationship with God. As the "all-pervading transcendence is eternally situated in acts of sacrifice" (*Gītā* 3.15), sacrifice directed by the scriptures gives a satisfaction beyond selfishness. Such satisfaction may lead a soul to search out the supreme object of sacrifice, Kṛṣṇa.

The link between sex and reproduction requires one of two sacrifices – the sacrifice of celibacy, or the sacrifice of marriage and parenting. Each of these types of support for material sexuality involves unique pleasures and austerities. Because of the soul's past deeds, each person in this material world has a predestined amount of pleasure and austerity in this life, which is mostly fixed. However, we can usually change the *type*. People can, therefore, choose the way of dealing with mundane sexuality that is in harmony with their nature, age, and circumstance. When one is getting the pleasures suited for one's own nature and time of life, the concomitant austerities are bearable and often even joyful. As Kṛṣṇa explains in the third chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, only one who accepts the austerities of a position has a right to enjoy the pleasures of that position. Indeed, one who tries to take the pleasures without the austerities will find those pleasures to be an empty shell only. "One who does not follow in human life the cycle of sacrifice thus established by the *Vedas* certainly leads a life full of sin. Living only for the satisfaction of the senses, such a person lives in vain." (*Gītā* 3.16)

The Sacrifice of Celibacy

The first support system for those aspiring for perfection through *bhakti* is celibacy. This support is appropriate for those who feel energized without sex, even in subtle emotional forms. The Supreme Lord, who when He descends sets the example for how to live, lives as a celibate in His incarnation of Nara-Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi. Celibacy is often prescribed in the scripture as a great help for various types of yoga. Therefore, everyone should embrace the celibate life before marriage and, after the time of reproduction is passed, even within marriage. For a few people, lifetime celibacy without marriage is the most suitable support.

The celibate uses sexual energy – which includes creativity, enthusiasm, expansion, attraction to beauty, and the urge to connect with life – to accept all living beings as family and work innovatively for the ultimate good of others. Indeed, the saffron-colored clothing worn by celibates in Vedic culture is of the same hue as the sacred fire, *agni-paricchadān* (*Bhāgavatam* 7.12.21). Freedom is one of the primary pleasures of a celibate life lived according to śāstric guidelines. Celibacy also makes it easy to live śāstrically according to one's tastes without having to be overly concerned with pleasing family members. Other pleasures are simplicity and a satisfaction in the accomplishment of sense control. Without the need to impress potential mates, there is peacefulness and satisfaction. Less time and energy are needed for basic maintenance, and so one can more easily choose work for personal fulfillment and meaning rather than necessity.

The austerities of the celibate life involve not only sexual abstinence, but also the renunciation of subtle, emotional, quasi-sexual exchanges such as flirting and frivolous talks. A celibate should limit wealth, food, and possessions to basic needs.

The dharma of a celibate includes a focus on scripture study, prayer, and purification of existence. The youthful celibate focuses on spiritual study; the older celibate on producing literary works and holding learned discourses. (*Bhāgavatam* 2.2.5, Purport)

Because the pleasures of channeling sexuality into a celibate life are sweet and enticing, a parody of it exists in modern society. Unfortunately the imitation, which seeks the pleasures without the austerity and is not based on the sacred, aggrieves individuals and society, harming rather than helping spiritual life. This modern "single life" is a parody of the celibate life, as it advertises the celibates' freedom and simplicity – but without the celibacy that makes such pleasures possible. This parody consists either of no marriage or of delaying marriage and childbearing well past the time of desire and peak fertility. During this time, people may have one or more sexual partners, using contraception and even abortion to keep their so-called single status. Even those who abstain from sex often absorb their minds and hearts in the romance prevalent in various forms of media.

The Sacrifice of Marriage

The second support is marriage. Most people cannot live a scripturally directed celibate life during their youth and require the support of marriage. The incarnation of the Lord who sets the example of monogamous marriage is Lord Rāmacandra and His wife, Sītā, who remained faithful through many trials. The married couple use their sexual energy to produce children they raise in spiritual consciousness. Family members help each other and work as a team to meet material demands, have a pleasing emotional connection, and encourage each other in spiritual life. Companionship, stability, and security are some of the primary pleasures of married life guided by scripture. Regulated sexual life and home-cooked food please the senses, as does a home filled with comfortable furniture, art, and music. Married persons seek freedom through social status and wealth, which allow them a wide

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range of choices. Growing children fascinate and amuse the parents, while offering scope for a variety of affectionate exchanges. In marriage one attempts to accumulate enough wealth to have the pleasure of giving in charity to worthy causes, which gives a deep sense of meaning and of contributing to society. The austerities of marriage include limiting one's sexual relationship to one person for life regardless of changing circumstances, working for income, tolerating the personality differences and conflicts within the family, dealing with envy and competition from neighbors, friends, and coworkers, arranging for children's education, maintaining a home, and so forth. The dharma of marriage focuses on charity, honesty, and sense control.

Those who can engage their sexuality in this *āśrama* system generally find the practice of *bhakti-yoga* much easier.

The pious and stable sexual gratifications of family life have induced a parody in modern society, as married couples seek to separate sex from reproduction. Through contraceptives and abortion, they seek to capture the pleasures without the austerity. The result in many countries, such as Italy, is birthrates so low that the government has become concerned that the whole culture will collapse. In these parodies of family life, people buy more than they can afford through irresponsible debt, and spend far more on the family than on charity. For example, Americans – residents of the most generous country in the world in terms of donations of time and money – give an average of only 3% of their income to charity. With an entertainment center as the home "altar," their family life becomes an entangling snare of materialism. Another parody is cohabitation without marriage, which sometimes produces children, and generally ends in a breakup. Northern Europe seems to favor unmarried temporary families, with 28% of children in Sweden in 2010 born to cohabiting unmarried parents. In America 40% of children are now born out of wedlock, compared to 4% in 1960.

The Need for Honesty

In considering which support system to use at what point in our lives, we need to be very honest. One of the most damaging tendencies to our spiritual advancement is deceit, according to Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, an associate of Lord Caitanya. A deceitful person tries to take the pleasures from one or more support systems, with none of the austerities. Honest people admit what kind of pleasures they want and then take up the corresponding austerities. A gift-giving exchange of love can then occur between the soul and Supreme Soul. One offers the austerities to Kṛṣṇa as a way to express loving gratitude and responsibility. And one accepts the concomitant pleasures as His loving gift, using them to glorify Him further.

The system of *āśrama* given in the scriptures prescribes celibacy until marriage, family life until around age fifty, and celibacy again until leaving this world. In the latter period of celibacy, married couples may opt to stay together but retire from occupations and from sex both physical and subtle. This *āśrama* system, while not possible for everyone today, works in synergy with the natural life cycle to engage mundane sexuality in ways appropriate to biology and psychology. Those who can engage their sexuality in this *āśrama* system generally find the practice of *bhakti-yoga* much easier.

A Loving Exchange with Kṛṣṇa

Whether as a celibate or a married person, the *bhakti-yogī* acts in the way Prabhupāda's guru, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, describes here: "If whatever is accepted be received as favor vouchsafed by the Supreme Lord, the worldly activity will cease to be such and will turn into service of Godhead (*bhakti*)." (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.61, Purport)

Prabhupāda explains the same principle:

> Whatever Kṛṣṇa gives us . . . Just like a master. A master allots something to the servant. "You can enjoy this." That *prasādam*. You understand. "Everything belongs to Kṛṣṇa, even my hands and legs. They also belong to Kṛṣṇa, all the parts of my body. They belong to Kṛṣṇa. Then they should be used for Kṛṣṇa." That is called *bhakti*. (Lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.9–10, Delhi, November 14, 1973)

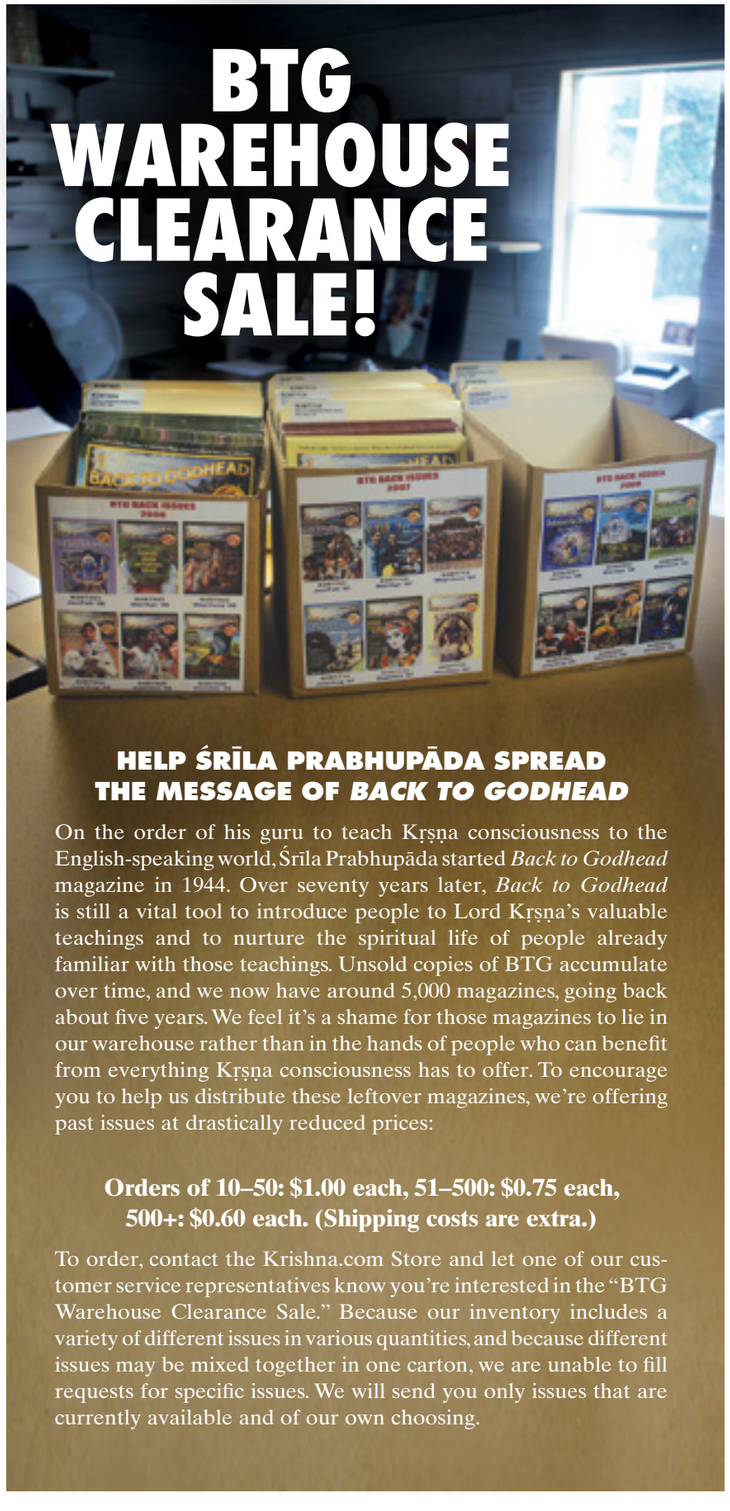
When one acts on this principle, then "matter dovetailed for the cause of the Absolute Truth regains its spiritual quality." (*Gītā* 4.24, Purport).

When people live in this mood of a loving exchange with Kṛṣṇa, the intrinsically spiritual processes of *bhakti-yoga* such as hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa, along with an individually appropriate support system for mundane sexuality, unify in transcendence, as explained in the *Gītā* (4.24): "A person who is fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is sure to attain the spiritual kingdom because of his full contribution to spiritual activities, in which the consummation is absolute and that which is offered is of the same spiritual nature."

As *bhakti-yogīs* mature, gradually material sexuality becomes as unattractive as someone's spit-out chewing gum lying on the ground. There is no hatred for sex per se, which is simply a biological function. Nor is there hatred for those who may be objects of sexual attraction, as they are simply other embodied souls. However, there is repulsion from lust, which is the drive to gain happiness for one's senses and mind by using the energy of the Lord and other beings. Mundane sexual lust gradually and proportionally transforms back into its original nature and becomes love of God. Then the need for a support system of a celibate or married *āśrama* starts to pale. One may still live in one of those *āśramas*, but as a service to Kṛṣṇa and an example to others, not because of a personal need to do so.

The enlightened devotee's detachment derives from the superior satisfaction of spiritual love. The rising tide of spiritual love gradually increases to a flood. This love, real love, means giving rather than taking. It means giving oneself for the pleasure of God. It means being an agent to unite the Lord and His energy of pleasure – Kṛṣṇa with Rādhā, Nārāyaṇa with Lakṣmī, Rāma with Sītā. Of course, the Lord and His eternal consort do not depend on a tiny soul to aid their union. It is the kindness of the Lord that He engages the expanded living beings in this way so as to share His bliss. The finite soul, thus linked with the infinite through loving service, eternally experiences ever-expanding ecstasy. Such is our natural, constitutional, inherent nature. Let us take daily steps toward regaining our nature and letting go of its pale reflection.

Ūrmila Devī Dāsī, a BTG associate editor, has a Ph.D. in educational leadership from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. She recently published Ragunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī's Śrī Manaḥ-śikṣā*, fully illustrated in two volumes, available on Amazon.com.* Dr. Best Learn to Read, *her three-part series to teach reading to children, is available at the Krishna.com Store.*



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CALENDAR

This calendar is calculated for Mayapur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. For the exact dates for your area, go to ***www.vaisnavacalendar.com****.*

Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in His disciplic succession.

Month of Dāmodara
(*October 17–November 14*)

NOVEMBER

4 – Disappearance anniversary of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Devotees observe this day with personal remembrances of Śrīla Prabhupāda, readings from his biography, and fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

8 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, a great follower of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan.

11 – Utthānā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gaurakiśora Dāsa Bābājī, the spiritual master of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who was Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master. Fasting till noon.

14 – Śrī Kṛṣṇa Rāsa-yātrā. Last day of Bhīṣma Pañcaka and Cāturmāsya.

Month of Keśava
(*November 15–December 13*)

25 – Utpannā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

DECEMBER

10 – Mokṣadā Ekadaśī
Fasting from grains and beans. The anniversary of the day on which Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā.*

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura

Month of Nārāyaṇa
(*December 14–January 12*)

17 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the spiritual master of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

24 – Saphalā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

30 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Locana Dāsa Ṭhākura, a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa known for his Bengali devotional songs.

BOOK SECTION: ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Referred to as "the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature," *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa,* or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

BHŪMI CITES VEDIC AUTHORITY

To resolve the conflict between herself and King Pṛthu, the earth goddess says that her solution will be based on Vedic injunctions.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 18

मैत्रेय उवाच

1 इत्थं पृथुमभिष्टूय रुषा प्रस्फुरिताधरम्
पुनराहावनिर्भीता संस्तभ्यात्मानमात्मना

maitreya uvāca
itthaṁ pṛthum abhiṣṭūya
ruṣā prasphuritādharam
punar āhāvanir bhītā
saṁstabhyātmānam ātmanā

maitreyaḥ uvāca – the great saint Maitreya continued to speak; *ittham* – thus; *pṛthum* – unto King Pṛthu; *abhiṣṭūya* – after offering prayers; *ruṣā* – in anger; *prasphurita* – trembling; *adharam* – his lips; *punaḥ* – again; *āha* – she said; *avaniḥ* – the planet earth; *bhītā* – in fear; *saṁstabhya* – after settling; *ātmānam* – the mind; *ātmanā* – by the intelligence.

The great saint Maitreya continued to address Vidura: My dear Vidura, at that time, after the planet earth finished her prayers, King Pṛthu was still not pacified, and his lips trembled in great anger. Although the planet earth was frightened, she made up her mind and began to speak as follows in order to convince the King.

2 सन्नियच्छाभिभो मन्युं निबोध श्रावितं च मे
सर्वतः सारमादत्ते यथा मधुकरो बुधः

sanniyacchābhibho manyuṁ
nibodha śrāvitaṁ ca me
sarvataḥ sāram ādatte
yathā madhu-karo budhaḥ

sanniyaccha – please pacify; *abhibho* – O King; *manyum* – anger; *nibodha* – try to understand; *śrāvitam* – what is said; *ca* – also; *me* – by me; *sarvataḥ* – from everywhere; *sāram* – the essence; *ādatte* – takes; *yathā* – as; *madhu-karaḥ* – the bumblebee; *budhaḥ* – an intelligent person.

My dear Lord, please pacify your anger completely and hear patiently whatever I submit before you. Please turn your kind attention to this. (1) I may be very poor, but a learned man takes the essence of knowledge from all places, just as a bumblebee collects honey from each and every flower.

3 अस्मिँल्लोकेऽथवामुष्मिन्मुनिभिस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः
दृष्टा योगाः प्रयुक्ताश्च पुंसां श्रेयःप्रसिद्धये

asmil loke 'thavāmuṣmin
munibhis tattva-darśibhiḥ
dṛṣṭā yogāḥ prayuktāś ca
puṁsāṁ śreyaḥ-prasiddhaye

1) What example did Bhūmi Devī give to convince King Pṛthu to hear her suggestion?

asmin – in this; *loke* – duration of life; *atha vā* – or; *amuṣmin* – in the next life; *munibhiḥ* – by the great sages; *tattva* – the truth; *darśibhiḥ* – by those who have seen it; *dṛṣṭāḥ* – prescribed; *yogāḥ* – methods; *prayuktāḥ* – applied; *ca* – also; *puṁsām* – of the people in general; *śreyaḥ* – benefit; *prasiddhaye* – in the matter of obtaining.

To benefit all human society, not only in this life but in the next, the great seers and sages have prescribed various methods conducive to the prosperity of the people in general.

PURPORT: Vedic civilization takes advantage of the perfect knowledge presented in the *Vedas* and presented by great sages and *brāhmaṇas* for the benefit of human society. [2] Vedic injunctions are known as *śruti*, and the additional supplementary presentations of these principles, as given by the great sages, are known as *smṛti*. They follow the principles of Vedic instruction. Human society should take advantage of the instructions from both *śruti* and *smṛti*. If one wants to advance in spiritual life, he must take these instructions and follow the principles. [3] In *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says that if one poses himself as advanced in spiritual life but does not refer to the *śrutis* and *smṛtis* he is simply a disturbance in society. One should follow the principles laid down in *śrutis* and *smṛtis* not only in one's spiritual life but in material life as well. As far as human society is concerned, it should follow the *Manu-smṛti* as well, for these laws are given by Manu, the father of mankind.

In the *Manu-smṛti* it is stated that a woman should not be given independence, but should be given protection by her father, husband, and elder sons. In all circumstances a woman should remain dependent upon some guardian. Presently women are given full independence like men, but actually we can see that such independent women are no happier than those women who are placed under guardians.

If people follow the injunctions given by the great sages, *śrutis* and *smṛtis*, they can actually be happy in both this life and the next. Unfortunately rascals are manufacturing so many ways and means to be happy. Everyone is inventing so many methods. Consequently human society has lost the standard ways of life, both materially and spiritually, and as a result people are bewildered, and there is no peace or happiness in the world. Although they are trying to solve the problems of human society in the United Nations, they are still baffled. [4] Because they do not follow the liberated instructions of the *Vedas*, they are unhappy.

Two significant words used in this verse are *asmin* and *amuṣmin. Asmin* means "in this life," and *amuṣmin* means "in the next life." [5] Unfortunately in this age, even exalted professors and learned men believe that there is no next life and that everything is finished in this life. Since they are rascals and fools, what advice can they give? Still they are passing as learned scholars and professors. In this verse the word *amuṣmin* is very explicit. It is the duty of everyone to mold his life in such a way that he will have a profitable next life. Just as a boy is educated in order to become happy later, one should be educated in this life in order to attain an eternal and prosperous life after death. It is therefore essential that people follow what is given in the *śrutis* and *smṛtis* to make sure that the human mission is successful.

2) What are *śruti* and *smṛti*?
3) What does Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī say about one who poses himself as advanced in spiritual life but does not refer to the *śrutis* and *smṛtis*?
4) Why are people today unhappy?
5) What belief of "exalted professors and learned men" disqualifies them from giving advice?

4 तानातिष्ठति यः सम्यगुपायान् पूर्वदर्शितान् अवरः श्रद्धयोपेत उपेयान् विन्दतेऽञ्जसा

tān ātiṣṭhati yaḥ samyag
upāyān pūrva-darśitān
avaraḥ śraddhayopeta
upeyān vindate 'ñjasā

tān – those; *ātiṣṭhati* – follows; *yaḥ* – anyone who; *samyak* – completely; *upāyān* – principles; *pūrva* – formerly; *darśitān* – instructed; *avaraḥ* – inexperienced; *śraddhayā* – with faith; *upetaḥ* – being situated; *upeyān* – the fruits of activities; *vindate* – enjoys; *añjasā* – very easily.

One who follows the principles and instructions enjoined by the great sages of the past can utilize these instructions for practical purposes. Such a person can very easily enjoy life and pleasures.

PURPORT: The Vedic principles (*mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*) urge us to follow in the footsteps of great liberated souls. In this way we can receive benefit in both this life and the next, and we can also improve our material life. By following the principles laid down by great sages and saints of the past, we can very easily understand the aim of all life. The word *avaraḥ*, meaning "inexperienced," is very significant in this verse. Every conditioned soul is inexperienced. Everyone is *abodha jāta* – born a fool and rascal. In democratic government at the present moment all kinds of fools and rascals are making decisions. But what can they do? What is the result of their legislation? They enact something today just to whimsically repeal it tomorrow. One political party utilizes a country for one purpose, and the next moment another political party forms a different type of government and nullifies all the laws and regulations. This process of chewing the chewed (*punaḥ punaś carvita-carvaṇānām*) will never make human society happy. In order to make all human society happy and prosperous, we should accept the standard methods given by liberated persons.

5 तानना दृत्य योऽविद्वानर्थानारभते स्वयम् तस्य व्यभिचरन्त्यर्था आरब्धाश्च पुनः पुनः

tān anādṛtya yo 'vidvān
arthān ārabhate svayam
tasya vyabhicaranty arthā
ārabdhāś ca punaḥ punaḥ

tān – those; *anādṛtya* – neglecting; *yaḥ* – anyone who; *avidvān* – rascal; *arthān* – schemes; *ārabhate* – begins; *svayam* – personally; *tasya* – his; *vyabhicaranti* – do not become successful; *arthāḥ* – purposes; *ārabdhāḥ* – attempted; *ca* – and; *punaḥ punaḥ* – again and again.

A foolish person who manufactures his own ways and means through mental speculation and does not recognize the authority of the sages who lay down unimpeachable directions is simply unsuccessful again and again in his attempts.

PURPORT: At the present moment it has become fashionable to disobey the unimpeachable directions given by the *ācāryas* and liberated souls of the past. Presently people are so fallen that they cannot distinguish between a liberated soul and a conditioned soul. [6] A conditioned soul is hampered by four defects: he is sure to commit mistakes, he is sure to become illusioned, he has a tendency to cheat others, and his senses are imperfect. Consequently we have to take direction from liberated persons. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement directly receives instructions from the Supreme Personality of Godhead via persons who are strictly following His instructions. [7] Although a follower may not be a liberated person, if he follows the supreme, liberated Personality of Godhead, his actions are naturally liberated from the contamination of the material nature. Lord Caitanya therefore says: "By My order you may become a spiritual master." [8] One can immediately become a spiritual master by having full faith in the transcendental words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and by following His instructions. Materialistic men are not interested in taking directions from a liberated person, but they are very much interested in their own concocted ideas, which make them repeatedly fail in their attempts. [9] Because the entire world is now following the imperfect directions of conditioned souls, humanity is completely bewildered.

6 पुरा सृष्टा ह्योषधयो ब्रह्मणा या विशाम्पते भुज्यमाना मया दृष्टा असद्भिरधृतव्रतैः

purā sṛṣṭā hy oṣadhayo
brahmaṇā yā viśāmpate
bhujyamānā mayā dṛṣṭā
asadbhir adhṛta-vrataiḥ

purā – in the past; *sṛṣṭāḥ* – created; *hi* – certainly; *oṣadhayaḥ* – herbs and food grains; *brahmaṇā* – by Lord Brahmā; *yāḥ* – all those which; *viśām-pate* – O King; *bhujyamānāḥ* – being enjoyed; *mayā* – by me; *dṛṣṭāḥ* – seen; *asadbhiḥ* – by nondevotees; *adhṛta-vrataiḥ* – devoid of all spiritual activities.

My dear King, the seeds, roots, herbs, and grains, which were created by Lord Brahmā in the past, are now being used by nondevotees, who are devoid of all spiritual understanding.

PURPORT: [10] Lord Brahmā created this material world for the use of the living entities, but it was created according to a plan that all living entities who might come into it to dominate it for sense gratification would be given directions by Lord Brahmā in the *Vedas* in order that they might ultimately leave it and return home, back to Godhead. All necessities grown on earth – namely fruits, flowers, trees, grains, animals, and animal by-products – were created for use in sacrifice for the satisfaction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu. However, the planet earth in the shape of a cow herein submits that all these utilities are being used by nondevotees, who have no plans for spiritual understanding. [11] Although there are immense potencies within the earth for the production of grains, fruits, and flowers, this production is checked by the earth itself when it is misused by nondevotees, who have no spiritual goals. Everything belongs to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and everything can be used for His satisfaction. Things should not be used for the sense gratification of the

6) What are the four defects of the conditioned soul?
7) How can a nonliberated person perform actions that are liberated from the contamination of the material nature?
8) How can one become a spiritual master?
9) Why is humanity today completely bewildered?
10) What was the plan for which the universe was created?
11) When does the earth check the production of grains, fruits, and flowers?

living entities. This is the whole plan of material nature according to the directions of this material nature.

In this verse the words *asadbhiḥ* and *adhṛta-vrataiḥ* are important. The word *asadbhiḥ* refers to the nondevotees. 12 The nondevotees have been described in *Bhagavad-gītā* as *duṣkṛtinaḥ* (miscreants), *mūḍhāḥ* (asses or rascals), *narādhamāḥ* (lowest of mankind), and *māyayāpahṛta-jñānāḥ* (those who have lost their knowledge to the power of the illusory energy). All these persons are *asat*, nondevotees. Nondevotees are also called *gṛha-vrata,* whereas the devotee is called *dhṛta-vrata*. The whole Vedic plan is that the misguided conditioned souls who have come to lord it over material nature should be trained to become *dhṛta-vrata*. This means that they should take a vow to satisfy their senses or enjoy material life only by satisfying the senses of the Supreme Lord. Activities intended to satisfy the senses of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, are called *kṛṣṇārthe 'khila-ceṣṭāḥ*. This indicates that one can attempt all kinds of work, but one should do so to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. This is described in *Bhagavad-gītā* as *yajñārthāt karma*. The word *yajña* indicates Lord Viṣṇu. We should work only for His satisfaction. In modern times (Kali-yuga), however, people have forgotten Viṣṇu altogether, and they conduct their activities for sense gratification. Such people will gradually become poverty-stricken, for they cannot use things which are to be enjoyed by the Supreme Lord for their own sense gratification. If they continue like this, there will ultimately be a state of poverty, and no grains, fruits, or flowers will be produced. Indeed, it is stated in the Twelfth Canto of *Bhāgavatam* that at the end of Kali-yuga people will be so polluted that there will no longer be any grains, wheat, sugarcane, or milk.

7 अपालितानादृता च भवद्भिर्लोकपालकैः
चोरीभूतेऽथ लोकेऽहं यज्ञार्थेऽग्रसमोषधीः

apālitānādṛtā ca
bhavadbhir loka-pālakaiḥ
corī-bhūte 'tha loke 'haṁ
yajñārthe 'grasam oṣadhīḥ

apālitā – without being taken care of; *anādṛtā* – being neglected; *ca* – also; *bhavadbhiḥ* – like your good self; *loka-pālakaiḥ* – by the governors or kings; *corī-bhūte* – being beset by thieves; *atha* – therefore; *loke* – this world; *aham* – I; *yajña-arthe* – for the purpose of performing sacrifices; *agrasam* – have hidden; *oṣadhīḥ* – all the herbs and grains.

My dear King, not only are grains and herbs being used by nondevotees, but, as far as I am concerned, I am not being properly maintained. Indeed, I am being neglected by kings who are not punishing these rascals who have turned into thieves by using grains for sense gratification. Consequently I have hidden all these seeds, which were meant for the performance of sacrifice.

PURPORT: That which happened during the time of Pṛthu Mahārāja and his father, King Vena, is also happening at this present moment. A huge arrangement exists for the production of large-scale industrial and agricultural products, but all these products are meant for sense gratification. Therefore despite such productive capacities there is scarcity because the world's population is full of thieves. The word *corī-bhūte* indicates that the population has turned to thievery. According to Vedic understanding, men are transformed into thieves when they plan economic development for sense gratification. It is also explained in *Bhagavad-gītā* that if one eats food grains without offering them to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Yajña, he is a thief and liable to be punished. According to spiritual communism, all properties on the surface of the globe belong to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The population has a right to use goods only after offering them to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is the process of accepting *prasāda*. Unless one eats *prasāda*, he is certainly a thief. It is the duty of governors and kings to punish such thieves and maintain the world nicely. If this is not done, grains will no longer be produced, and people will simply starve. Indeed, not only will people be obliged to eat less, but they will kill one another and eat each other's flesh. They are already killing animals for flesh, so when there will no longer be grains, vegetables and fruits, they will kill their own sons and fathers and eat their flesh for sustenance.

8 नूनं ता वीरुधः क्षीणा मयि कालेन भूयसा
तत्र योगेन दृष्टेन भवानादातुमर्हति

nūnaṁ tā vīrudhaḥ kṣīṇā
mayi kālena bhūyasā
tatra yogena dṛṣṭena
bhavān ādātum arhati

nūnam – therefore; *tāḥ* – those; *vīrudhaḥ* – herbs and grains; *kṣīṇāḥ* – deteriorated; *mayi* – within me; *kālena* – in course of time; *bhūyasā* – very much; *tatra* – therefore; *yogena* – by proper means; *dṛṣṭena* – acknowledged; *bhavān* – Your Majesty; *ādātum* – to take; *arhati* – ought.

Due to being stocked for a very long time, all the grain seeds within me have certainly deteriorated. Therefore you should immediately arrange to take these seeds out by the standard process, which is recommended by the ācāryas or śāstras.

[*Continued in the next issue.*]

12) Who are the four kinds of nondevotees described in the *Bhagavad-gītā*?

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

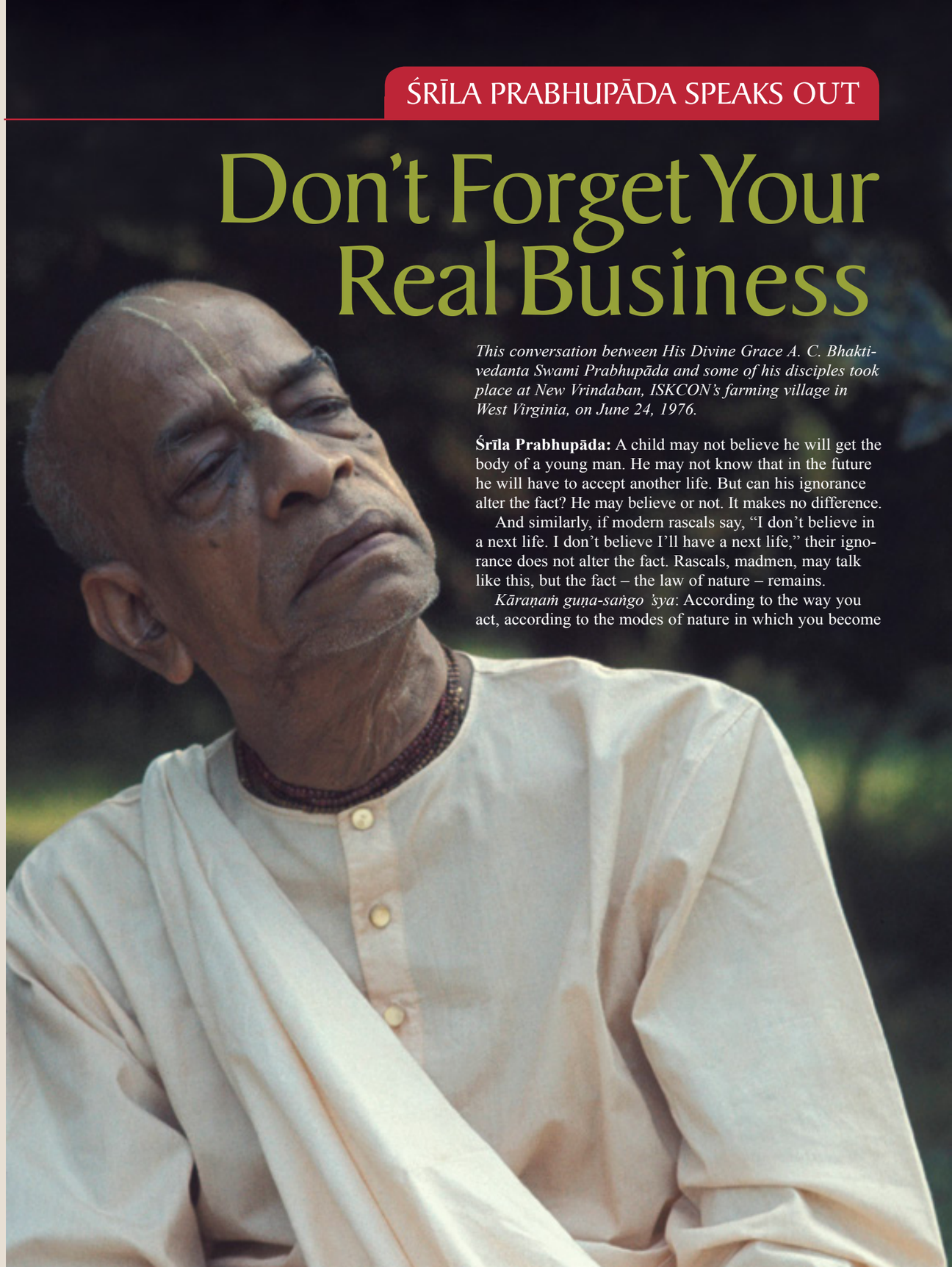
Don't Forget Your Real Business

This conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples took place at New Vrindaban, ISKCON's farming village in West Virginia, on June 24, 1976.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: A child may not believe he will get the body of a young man. He may not know that in the future he will have to accept another life. But can his ignorance alter the fact? He may believe or not. It makes no difference.

And similarly, if modern rascals say, "I don't believe in a next life. I don't believe I'll have a next life," their ignorance does not alter the fact. Rascals, madmen, may talk like this, but the fact – the law of nature – remains.

Kāraṇaṁ guṇa-saṅgo 'sya: According to the way you act, according to the modes of nature in which you become



enmeshed, you will receive a suitable body in your next life. The real fact is, these rascals will have to accept a body just suitable to their spiritual development, or lack of spiritual development. What they believe or do not believe makes no difference.

Disciple: But what if they object, "You want us to pull back from our industrial civilization so that we can spend more time preparing for our next life. But farm-and-village civilization might be too difficult for us. We'd rather go to the factory for eight hours and then come home and enjoy life."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, you can enjoy life, just as we are. We are eating and sleeping and so forth; everyone does that in any event. But if you enjoy life in such a way that you forget your real, spiritual business in life, is that intelligent? Your real business, now that you have received this human form, is to improve your next life – regain your original, spiritual form, back home in the spiritual world.

Anyway, you are going to have a next life. Now, suppose that by your present actions, in your next life you have to accept the form of a dog. Is that success? So you must learn the real science: How, instead of becoming an associate of dogs, you can become an associate of God. That is intelligence. That is success.

Disciple: But in this present life, why is it better, for instance, if we get our lighting by growing castor seed? What if we think we'd rather get our lighting by drilling for oil? Why is growing castor seed better than drilling for oil?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You require lighting of some kind. All right. So finish that lighting business as simply and quickly as possible. In the rest of your time, the time you have saved, pursue and perfect your self-realization. Learn about your soul and your relationship with the Supreme Soul. That is the ideal life. Take this child. He simply wants to play, not to become educated and cultured. He just wants to make some improvements on his toys or his ball-playing. It that very good intelligence?

Disciple: No, from the standpoint of education, he's pretty much wasting time. But talking about wasting time – people on farms work some awfully long hours.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Not on small family farms, say four acres or thereabouts. In the spring you work a month and a half or two months for planting, and in the fall perhaps a month and a half or two for harvesting. If you think improving your electrical arrangements is better than living the simple life, we have no objection. But if you forget your real, spiritual business, is that intelligent?

Disciple: It wouldn't be, no.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is our proposal. Your real business in life is how to become God conscious, Kṛṣṇa conscious. If simply for improving your material condition you forget your real, spiritual business, is that intelligence?

So this modern, so-called intelligence is known as *duṣkṛtī*. *Kṛtī* means "resourcefulness." But *duḥ* means "sinful, harmful activities." You are utilizing your resourcefulness for harmful activities.

Take, for example, these modern flesh-eaters. Now, when uncivilized men living in the jungle need to eat something, they shoot arrows or throw spears at some poor animal. And the animal dies and then they eat his flesh. These modern flesh-eaters, though, instead of killing the animal by throwing a spear, have devised slaughterhouses with sophisticated machinery to kill the animal.

You may think this is an improvement. "Now we use our sophisticated machinery instead of throwing a spear. The old-fashioned method takes so much time. But now we can kill many, many animals per hour." This is your improvement?

Just consider what fools and rascals people have become. They believe their slaughterhouses are an improvement, a milestone of civilization. "When we were uncivilized, we were spearing some animal and eating his flesh. But now, although we are doing the same thing – killing some poor animal and eating his flesh – we have improved our technique for killing." This is going on as "advancement of civilization." Do you think this is advancement of civilization?

Now that you are living the simple life on this farm – now, at last, you are civilized. For instance, instead of killing the cow, you just take her milk – no killing – and then you make butter and yogurt and whipped cream and buttermilk and fried curd, all sorts of delicious preparations. This is civilization.

But killing is sinful. You have no right to kill any creature – even an ant – because you cannot give that creature back his life. So killing is against the law of nature, the law of God.

In the scriptures the Lord warns us, "Killing is an infringement on nature's law, My law. Killing innocent creatures is the most sinful activity. If you use your human resourcefulness to perform this most sinful activity, then you must suffer in your next life."

Disciple: But we modern men don't believe our slaughterhouses are sinful.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: These nonsensical statements – "We believe . . ." "We don't believe . . ." If you are breaking God's most basic law – "Thou shalt not kill" – then you are a rascal. So what difference does it make, what you believe or don't believe? You are, after all, a rascal.

Now, suppose that by your present actions, in your next life you have to accept the form of a dog. Is that success?

PRONUNCIATION: ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma (rhymes with "drama"). To hear Śrīla Prabhupāda chanting, go to krishna.com/hare-krishna-maha-mantra.

Photo by Yamarāja Dāsa

YOGA

And the Great Mantra For Deliverance

A talk given at a yoga center in Rockland County, New York, explains why yoga and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa go well together.

by Satyarāja Dāsa

Nikunjte-lilā Devī Dāsī

I'VE BEEN ASKED TO introduce this program by briefly speaking about the relationship between chanting and modern-day yoga, to discuss how the sacred sound of the *mahā-mantra*, for example, can benefit one's yoga practice. For those who don't know, the *mahā-mantra* – Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare – is a sacred sound vibration, affirmed in Vedic texts as the best of all mantras, or transcendental utterances. It serves to free the mind of all unwanted distractions, to help one progress in spiritual life, and finally to bring one into the highly advanced realms of love of God.

The connection between this mantra and the *Yoga-sūtra* of Patañjali may not be obvious at first, but a careful look reveals that chanting such sacred sounds is a natural part of Patañjali's strategy, as we shall see. First of all, the *Yoga-sūtra*, originating in roughly the third century of the Common Era, should not be taken as an isolated text. It appeared in a milieu of Vedic rituals,

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cultured *brāhmaṇas*, ancient Sanskrit texts, and a deep understanding of theological truth, which included daily chanting as a religious practice. Patañjali's work was an addendum to an already evolved spiritual environment.

Moreover – and contrary to popular belief – in all its 196 aphorisms, the *Yoga-sūtra* rarely espouses the need for breathing exercises (*prāṇāyāma*) and sitting postures (*āsana*). Perhaps four or five such verses exist in the text. Rather, it centers on meditation, focusing the mind, and the importance of mastery of one's senses.

This is clear throughout the text, beginning with the famous second *sūtra* of the first section, which includes the famous words *yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*. This is lauded as Patañjali's succinct definition of yoga. As most of you know, it basically means, "Yoga is the restriction of the mind's fluctuations." In other words, it refers to getting the mind under control – instead of letting the mind control you.

Contrary to popular belief, *Yoga-sūtra* rarely espouses the need for breathing exercises and sitting positions.

Lord Kṛṣṇa talks about this very same principle in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.6), a yoga text that predates Patañjali's work: "For one who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his mind will be the greatest enemy."

And how does one get the mind under control? This is where we see the natural correlation between mantras and yoga as expressed by Patañjali. The two Sanskrit syllables of the word *mantra* can be taken to mean release or liberation (*tra*) of the mind (*man*). Mantra is thus a sound that can liberate the mind from all things material. In other words, controlling it, or situating it in transcendence.

Patañjali was aware of this. When he discusses the expected obstacles on the path to yogic perfection, he highlights the importance of focusing the mind (1.32). If the mind is focused, he teaches, it is less likely to get entangled in the material world and lost in the delusion of everyday existence (1.4). This is where mantras come in, and Patañjali mentions mantra chanting as a necessary part of the yoga process.

He says in the first verse of the *Yoga-sūtra's* Second Section, which focuses on practice, that mantras, among other things, are an inescapable part of the yoga paradigm, and specifically mantras in relation to Īśvara, or God. He writes, *tapaḥ-svādhyāyeśvara-praṇidhānāni kriyā-yogaḥ*: "Austerity, study of scriptures (*svādhyāya*, which includes the chanting of mantras), and dedication (*praṇidhāna*) to the Supreme Lord (*īśvara*) constitute the way to yoga." Although Patañjali doesn't use the word *mantra* in this verse, the famous *Yoga-sūtra* commentator known as Vyāsa (not to be confused with the compiler of the *Vedas*) writes in his commentary, "*Svādhyāya* in this context also refers to *japa* and general repetition of purifying mantras." Again, the *Yoga-sūtra* did not arise in a vacuum, and the culture that gave birth to it considered the chanting of mantras fundamental to spiritual practice.

In the first verse of the Fourth Section, which is about ultimate liberation, we are again directed toward the chanting of mantras, this time more specifically. Patañjali writes, *janmauṣadhi-mantra-tapaḥ-samādhi-jāḥ siddhayaḥ*: "The mystic perfections (*siddhayaḥ*) come (*jāḥ*) with birth (*janma*), [or they may be attained through] herbs (*auṣadhi*), mantras, austerities (*tapas*), or the culmination of concentration (*samādhi*)." So, mantras – mantras dedicated to Īśvara – figure prominently in both Patañjali's method of practice and in his concept of ultimate liberation.

The Mantra Oṁ

Patañjali doesn't mention the *mahā-mantra* as such, but he does mention *oṁ* in 1.23–1.29 and elsewhere. Here he calls *oṁ* the "direct route to yogic perfection." Now, again, let us be aware of context: As far back as the *Upaniṣads* we are taught that *oṁ* is the sound representation of Kṛṣṇa. This is specifically mentioned in the *Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad*, and it was well known to the teachers of the past. In fact, the great sixteenth-century philosopher Jīva Gosvāmī quotes the *Padma Purāṇa* (6.226.22–23) as follows in his *Bhakti-sandarbha* (178):

a-kāreṇocyate viṣṇuḥ
śrīr u-kāreṇa cocyate
ma-kāras tv anayor dāsaḥ
pañca-viṁśaḥ prakīrtitaḥ

"Regarding *oṁ* (*auṁ*), *a* represents Viṣṇu, *u* represents Śrī (Lakṣmī), and *m* represents the soul, the twenty-fifth element and a servant of these two [Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī]."

Śrī Jīva's contemporary Rāghava Paṇḍita offers an even more esoteric reading in his book *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti-ratna-prakāśa* (verse 49):

a-kāreṇocyate kṛṣṇaḥ
sarva-lokaika-nāyakaḥ
u-kāreṇocyate rādhā
ma-kāro jīva-vācakaḥ

"[In *auṁ*] the letter *a* refers to Kṛṣṇa, the supreme leader, the letter *u* refers to Rādhā, and the letter *m* refers to the *jīva* soul."

One might ask why Śrī Jīva and Rāghava Paṇḍita seem to disagree on details. But in fact the essence of what they are saying is the same: They are basically saying that *a* in *auṁ* refers to God, *u* refers to His energy or potency, and *m* refers to the tiny soul, who is meant to serve Them.

What we have here essentially is the *mahā-mantra*, a prayer to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa: "O Kṛṣṇa (God), O Harā (Rādhā, Kṛṣṇa's energy or feminine aspect), please engage me (the living being) in Your service." The connection between *oṁ* and the *mahā-mantra* is directly mentioned by the great nineteenth-century Vaiṣṇava theologian Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in his book *Bhajana-rahasya* (*Prathama-yama-sādhana* 1.29): "The three syllables in *oṁkāra* – *a*, *u*, and *m* – represent Hari, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma."

Although Patañjali predates some of these specific references, the ideas themselves are ancient, and it would be highly unlikely that Patañjali wouldn't have known about them, and his contemporaries, his cultured and learned audience, would have known them too.

The Name and the Named Are the Same

Now, why should mantras, like *oṁ* or the *mahā-mantra*, be so important? It's because they are identical to the spiritual entity they invoke. This is what the tradition teaches. The sages ask us to reflect on a thing and its name. In this world, they are two different things, right? If you chant "water, water, water," your thirst is not quenched. This is because the word *water* and the substance water are not the same. But that's not true for spiritual substance: God and His name are identical. In fact, Patañjali alludes to this notion when he writes, in *Yoga-sūtra* 3.17, "The name associated with an object, the object itself, and the conceptual existence of the object – all three must in some sense interpenetrate each other. By contemplating the distinction and sameness between these three, one understands the true meaning of sounds."

This is the idea, and this is what the sages of India taught. When extended to God and the spiritual world, we see that all distinctions between the name and the named evaporate. This understanding was part of Indian culture long before the *Yoga-sūtra* existed.

So the chanting of mantras is how one gets the mind under control, because the mantra frees the mind of all material concepts and establishes it in a spiritual environment, focusing it on God, who is identical to His name. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* (6.27): "The yogi whose mind is fixed on Me verily attains the highest happiness. By virtue of his identity with the spiritual element, he is liberated; his mind is peaceful, his passions are quieted, and he is freed from sin." This is the perfection of yoga.

Controlling the Wild Horses

As my spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda, says in his book *On the Way to Kṛṣṇa*, "The mind is always concocting objects for happiness. I am always thinking, 'This will make me happy,' or 'That will make me happy.' 'Happiness is here. Happiness is there.' In this way, the mind is taking us anywhere and everywhere. It is as though we are riding on a chariot behind an unbridled horse. We have no power over where we are going but can only sit in horror and watch helplessly. As soon as the mind is engaged in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness process specifically

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BBC Meditation

by Kṛṣṇa Dharma Dāsa

The author has been a regular British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) contributor since 1998. BBC Radio 2, where these meditations are aired, attracts from one million to eight million listeners, depending on the time of day. Thoughts from different contributors on topics assigned by the BBC are aired three or four times a day. This is the sixth in a series of eight meditations.

Courage

I remember back in the sixties when the words "take courage" were the ubiquitous advertising slogan for Courage beer. Quite a nifty publicity idea, I suppose, but a few years ago the beer's resurrected TV campaign was banned. The censors quite rightly concluded that encouraging us to drink beer to increase our confidence might not be the best way to go.

Courage means standing up for what I believe to be right. Intoxication, on the other hand, tends to make many of us blur the boundary between right and wrong, and over the years I've realized that I need a clear head for that kind of discrimination. For me, courage has been more about staying true to myself than standing up to others, in making what I believe to be the right moral choices.

As a young man I became a Kṛṣṇa monk, renouncing the lifestyle choices of my friends, my family, and indeed myself up until that point. It was a radical step. I took vows to give up many of the worldly pleasures I had pursued till then, such as intoxication, illicit sex, meat-eating, and other such things. I donned the orange robes and moved into a temple. Soon after that, I actually joined the famous Hare Kṛṣṇa chanting parade up and down Oxford Street, which took a certain amount of courage, I have to say.

That was well over thirty years ago, and now I am married with children, but I still find myself having to draw upon my inner strength and courage to maintain my principles. For me, this is about choosing truth over illusion, the true self or spirit as opposed to the body and its pleasures.

I believe happiness comes when I choose to follow spiritual teachings rather than my own ever-demanding senses and mind. This I find brings an inner fulfilment far more profound than the flickering joys of sensual indulgence. So I shall continue to take courage, although not the Dutch* variety, to make the right moral choices. And also to join the Oxford Street crew from time to time as well.

**"Dutch courage" refers to courage gained from intoxication with alcohol.*

by chanting, then the wild horses of the mind will gradually come under our control." This is what chanting does: It stops us from becoming devoured or overcome by materialistic life and situates us in our natural consciousness, which is spiritual and ever blissful.

It must be noted that this chanting is entirely spiritual – it is not material in any sense of the word, even if, externally, it appears like everyday sound vibration. Prabhupāda writes about this as follows: "You may chant someone's name a half an hour, or sing a mundane song three or four times, but before long this becomes tiresome. Hare Kṛṣṇa, however, can be chanted day and night, and one will never tire of it. Therefore it is only through transcendental vibration that the mind can be kept in a state of equilibrium. When one's mental activities are thus stabilized, one is said to have attained yoga."

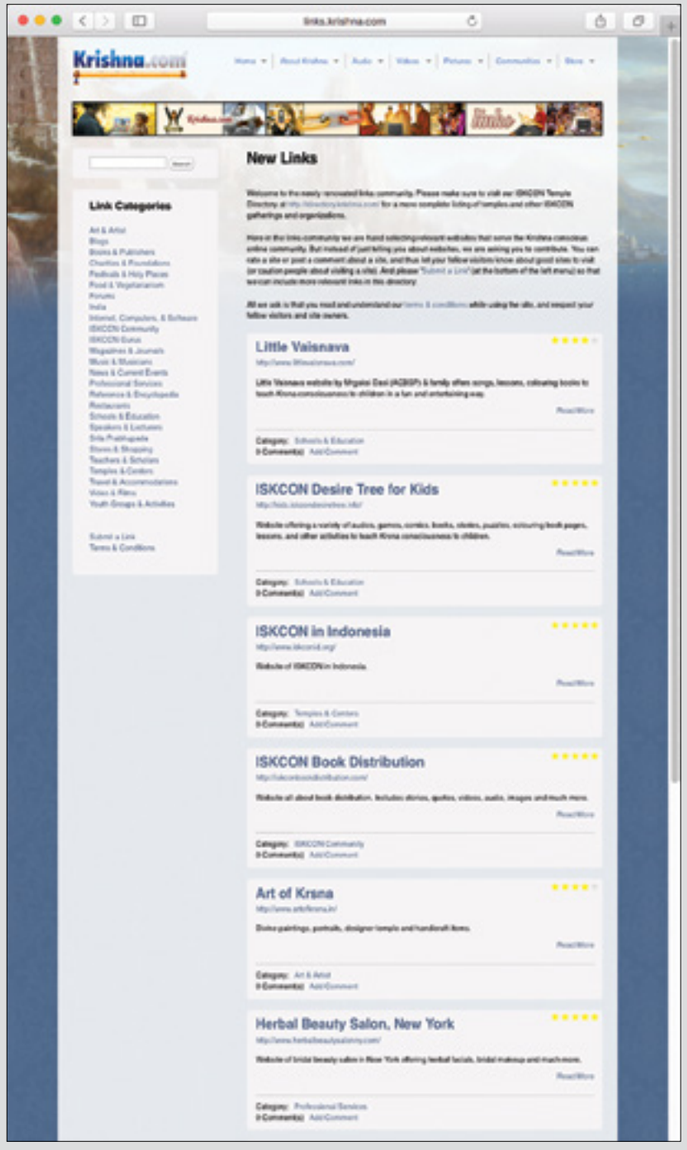
In conclusion, I want to return to that verse from the *Yoga-sūtra* with which I started this talk: *yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*. Real yoga is about controlling the fluctuations of the mind. *Vṛtti*, a key word in this verse, literally means "whirlpool." It's a complex yogic term indicating that the conditioned mind is debilitating, like a vortex that sucks all our energy and leaves us completely depleted, unable to pursue spiritual life. Chanting mantras, specifically the *mahā-mantra,* reverses that process, rejuvenates us, and allows us to gradually see who we really are: eternal spiritual souls always hankering to transcend material life and become lovers of God. This is not only the goal of yoga, but the goal of all of life and something we all strive for, in one way or another.

Thank you very much.

Satyarāja Dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, is a BTG associate editor and founding editor of the Journal of Vaishnava Studies. *He has written more than thirty books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness and lives near New York City.*

e-Kṛishna

Profiles of Kṛṣṇa-related websites



http://links.krishna.com is the curated links section at Krishna.com. You can browse the sections by topic or use the search box to find what you're looking for. If you have a Kṛṣṇa conscious website, or know of a website not in the list, click on Submit a Link on the homepage and let Krishna.com know about it.

If you're looking for news, recipes, music, art, books, or lectures, this is the place to come. Unlike using a search engine, you won't have to trawl through hundred of links for inappropriate sites while looking for those made for and by devotees.

Over the past few years, e-Krishna has brought you links to many interesting and useful sites. We started publishing this column to draw attention to the wonderful resources, information, and outreach that devotes are making available on the Internet. For many people the Internet has become a familiar part of life. We use it to organize programs, arrange to meet our close friends, and keep in touch with distant ones. You can read almost all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books online, watch videos of lectures, read about the activities of devotees all over the world, and even take *darśana* of deities in temples in many countries via streaming video. Devotees everywhere are making wonderful use of the Internet to inform and inspire us.

Internet technology has become so easy to use, we no longer need descriptions of websites and how to use them to find our way around. Therefore we have decided to retire e-Krishna, making this the last column.

You won't be lost for Kṛṣṇa conscious content, as devotees continue to create and share sites via newsletters, blogs, social media, and streaming video. Besides **http://links.krishna.com**, other Internet resources exist that provide an online index of links of interest to devotees, including **links.iskcondesiretree.com** and **www.radha.name/links/iskcon-web-sites**.

– Madhumaṅgala Dāsa

Unfathomable!

Even after this year's celebrations of ISKCON's Fiftieth Anniversary are over, we should always remember the great journey Prabhupāda took for us.

by Braja Sevakī Devī Dāsī

FRIDAY, AUGUST 13, 1965: a date every ISKCON devotee knows by heart, the day ISKCON really began, when the *Jaladuta* sailed out of Calcutta harbor and hobbled across the seas for thirty-five days until it reached New York harbor's Brooklyn Pier on September 19 and discharged one thin, small, elderly sadhu, Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.

That was over fifty years ago. And mid last year, on July 13, 2015 – the forty-ninth anniversary of the day ISKCON was created – the celebrations began in commemoration of the founding of ISKCON in New York City. Those celebrations continued right through the fiftieth anniversary: July 13, 2016.

The year is almost over now. But imagine: fifty years. It's an entire lifetime for some ISKCON members;

twice a lifetime for others; three-quarters of a lifetime for those who joined in the early days; "historical" for the very young. But no matter how old or young, everyone in ISKCON was swept up in the celebrations for ISKCON's Fiftieth.

Unfathomable.

The celebration of Prabhupāda's departure for America on the *Jaladuta* takes place worldwide annually, but 2015 was the fiftieth anniversary, and the celebrations – especially in Kolkata – were huge. This anniversary alone is enough to give pause: today, international travel is commonplace, flights from one side of the world to the other are offered several times a day by many and varied airlines, and take only a matter of hours. So for most, it takes a conscious effort to stop the mind, park it in neutral, close the doors of conditioned thought, and even attempt to imagine what it was like to undergo a 35-day sea voyage on a vessel as austere as the *Jaladuta*. Harder still to imagine that one passenger was and is so dear to us all. And worse, still, that he was elderly, sick, alone.

Unfathomable.

When we travel, it is to visit friends or family, ISKCON centers where devotees await our arrival, the sacred lands in India that Śrīla Prabhupāda introduced us to. Even if we want to get away alone, things are smooth – flights to tropical islands to recover at retreats with yoga, Ayurveda, and herbal remedies: things that are commonplace now, but were alien to us before Prabhupāda's journey across the ocean. That's right, you youngsters: *these things didn't exist before Prabhupāda landed on Western shores.*

Unfathomable.

"Celebrating 50 Years" is something we've all no doubt heard a lot of throughout this past year. We were unable to avoid such a glorious occasion, nor did we want to. But beneath the celebrations, the pomp and ceremony, the talks by senior devotees who were part of that time, the miracle of the second and third generations born in Vaiṣṇava families across the globe, the joy in the hearts of every devotee young or old, still, even after these celebrations are over, we should try daily to take a few minutes and consciously direct our minds towards the reality of 1965, and the great journey Prabhupāda took for us.

Unfathomable.

Prabhupāda arrived in New York "Carrying only forty rupees cash, which he himself called 'a few hours' spending in New York,' and an additional twenty dollars he had collected from selling three volumes of the *Bhāgavatam* to Captain Pandia." (*Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, Chapter 12) We speak these days of "austerity," of being "simple," of "living under the poverty line" even. But it is unlikely we know anyone who would have done what Prabhupāda did with what little he had in his possession: a few tin trunks of books, practically no money, a cloth bag holding just two changes of clothing. To see a renunciant travel between holy sites in India is rare enough; to see one cross history's boundaries and carve his name in the planet's heritage as the one who saved the world from doom is beyond rare.

Unfathomable.

On his first day in America at Commonwealth Pier in Boston, on board the *Jaladuta* Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote a poem entitled *Markine Bhāgavata-dharma.* The first verse reads, "My dear Lord Krsna, You are so kind upon this useless soul, but I do not know why You have brought me here. Now You can do whatever You like with me."

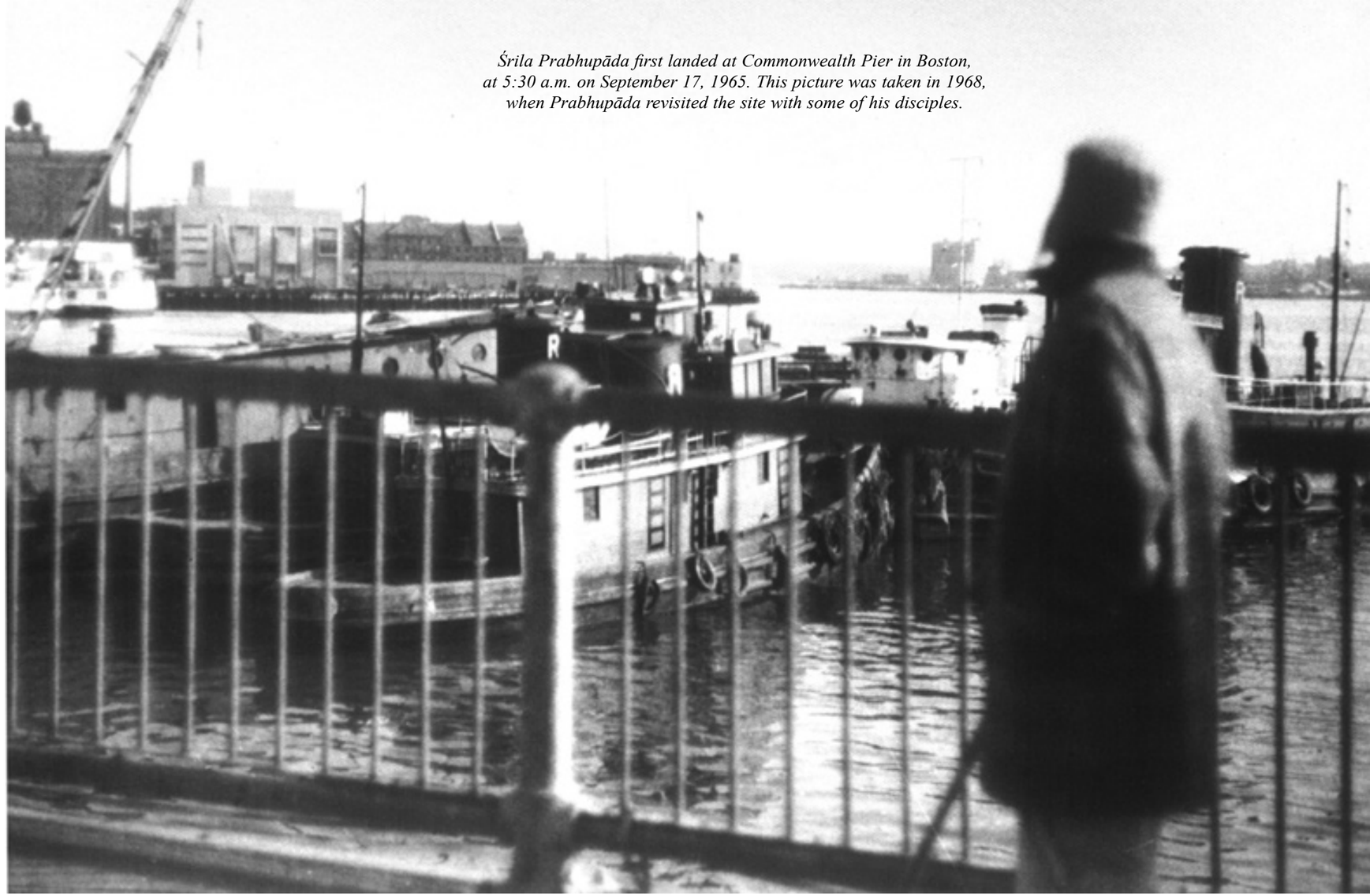
How many of us have taken such mammoth risks into unknown territory and prayed to Krsna to "do whatever You like with me"? Actually, since Prabhupāda wrote those words, quite a few have done so, inspired, as was Prabhupāda, by their spiritual master and Krsna. That is the phenomena Prabhupāda created: no other thought entered the heads of the pioneer devotees of ISKCON but to simply do as Swamiji asked, inspired by his example.

Unfathomable.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also wrote in that poem, "How will they understand the mellows of devotional service? O Lord, I am simply praying for Your mercy so that I will be able to convince them about Your message." How could we ever hope to understand devotion, service, and the rich, deep mellows that weave through both, uniting us with Krsna and His associates and binding us to them?

Unfathomable.

And that word is what made this year's celebrations so extraordinary and wonderful: that the unfathomable was made into something within our reach, something that became part of our lives, our goal in life, our purpose behind our every thought and action, our reason for living, our everything.



Śrīla Prabhupāda first landed at Commonwealth Pier in Boston, at 5:30 a.m. on September 17, 1965. This picture was taken in 1968, when Prabhupāda revisited the site with some of his disciples.

Śrīla Prabhupāda made the unfathomable fathomable.

That itself is . . . well . . .

Unfathomable.

So here's a meditation we can all engage in: every time we hear "ISKCON's Fiftieth," let us celebrate right at that moment, that very moment, our fortune at being caught in Prabhupāda's graceful web of love. We will hear that term a lot in the coming days – just because 2016 is drawing to an end doesn't mean this year will ever be forgotten. It won't: it's beyond special. So let us always meditate on this year and what it represents; let us not forget the richness of life and love we have been brought into since Śrīla Prabhupāda stepped onto the Brooklyn Pier, and then onto the soil of many other lands over the next twelve years; let us not be jaded by our fortune, inured to all we've been given, unconscious of what we take for granted, or ruined by our spoiled, conditioned natures.

Let us instead, fifty times a day, stop to thank Śrīla Prabhupāda for his *unfathomable* selflessness, his all-encompassing love and compassion, and his loyalty to guru and Kṛṣṇa. We should let the memories of these drown us daily, because without them . . . *we would have drowned.*

Braja Sevakī Dāsī (Sorensen) has lived in Mayapur for fourteen years, has published five books, and has been a regular Back to Godhead *contributor over the years. She also works on Śivarāma Swami's books, most notably* Nava-vraja-mahimā*, his nine-volume treatise on the sacred land of India through the Vaiṣṇava perspective of pastime, pilgrimage, and philosophy. She is currently studying for her divinity degree at the Bhaktivedanta Theological Seminary in Mayapur.*

FICTIONAL PRABHUPĀDAS

(*continued from page 31*)

3. A renunciant whose preaching is enriched with knowledge and detachment.
4. The first ISKCON rural community, founded in 1968 and named after Vrindavan, India, the village where Lord Kṛṣṇa sported as a boy.
5. Back-to-back festivals on the ISKCON calendar celebrating the advent anniversaries of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda.
6. A *śikṣā-guru* is an instructing spiritual master.
7. A *sampradāya* is a spiritual community or tradition.
8. Prabhu means "master" and is the way devotees formally address one another. By serving the Lord's devotees, one pleases the Lord.
9. *Guru-pūjā* is the ceremony to formally worship the spiritual master.
10. Deities are forms of God authorized by scripture and worshiped by devotees.
11. A *jagat-guru* ("world-guru") is a guru of gurus, a universal teacher.
12. From the Dedication page in the First Canto of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.
13. "Living still in sound" is a phrase from a verse Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura inscribed on the sacred tomb of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura.

In the next issue *. . . Unencumbered by impersonal and sentimental misconceptions about Śrīla Prabhupāda, we are now free to cultivate our own unique, foundational relationship with him as his eternal loving servants.*

Sureśvara Dāsa joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in 1970. Since 2011, on behalf of a committee of ISKCON's Governing Body Commission called "Śrīla Prabhupāda's Position," he has been traveling the ISKCON world, presenting the seminar series "Śrīla Prabhupāda, Our Founder-Ācārya." To find out how to bring the series to your area, please write to Sureśvara at suresvara@gmail.com.

NO NEWSPAPERS!

(*continued from page 21*)

dry, banal, pitiful topics as our daily fare?

Electronic Miners' Mentality

My newspaper family has passed on. The *Los Angeles Times*, with its smaller dimensions and only thirty-some pages, seems like a shrunken head to me. Commentators say it shrank because it cannot compete with electronic media. Some studies say that modern generations do not care to read as deeply as previous ones; they are blogging, surfing, Googling, i-Tuning, streaming, YouTubing.

The miners' mentality carries on in a glittering electronic version. Instead of "No newspapers?" we hear, "Is the Internet down?"

What is being dispersed through cyberspace to billions of screens is basically the same fodder that was offered in the newspapers of Śrīla Prabhupāda's time. Meanwhile, the devotee's task remains how to see. As a welder dons a protective mask before igniting a torch, the devotee dons a spiritual eye before opening a laptop. Our naked eye must be equipped with the corrective lens of *śāstra-cakṣuḥ* – "the eye of scripture" – to observe this world like our previous *ācāryas*.

The eye of a pure devotee is the eye of the pure spiritual self. The clarity with which we see the form of this material world in news reports corresponds to our degree of purification by our practice of devotional service to the pure devotee. What we see with material eyeballs is an illusion. Actual seeing takes place in the heart of a pure Vaiṣṇava.

Kṛṣṇa's Media

One of the great *ācāryas*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the spiritual master of Śrīla Prabhupāda, published a daily newspaper in India called *Nadīyā Prakāśa*. It was full of information about Kṛṣṇa consciousness as well as spiritual observation of current topics. A politician once asked him how he could come up with enough material to fill a newspaper with spiritual topics every day. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī replied that the information coming from the spiritual world is so dynamic that a spiritual newspaper could be published every minute.

Computer software and the Internet have become powerful instruments in devotional service to the Lord. Kṛṣṇa's images and the immense treasure of Vedic knowledge were formerly not as portable or researchable as they are now. Many valuable Kṛṣṇa conscious websites are helping to prove the truth of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's remark that news of the spiritual world can be published at every moment.

Still, the Internet is rife with material that can harm our spiritual lives. But if we stick to Kṛṣṇa's message, we can be like the swan, which can separate milk from a mixture of milk and water. We can be enlivened by nectarous messages on the Internet and avoid the trash that is the pilgrimage site for crows.

If we do this, someday the mundane world coming to us through our glowing screen will fade to dark in the realization of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's illumination. What is a glowworm in the daylight? What is a candle to the sun? The narrow miners' mentality will gradually fade. Kṛṣṇa's handsome, bold radiance will put the forms, names, sounds, and illuminations of this world in their proper perspective.

Karuṇā Dhārinī Devī Dāsī, a disciple of His Grace Vīrabāhu Dāsa, serves the deities at ISKCON Los Angeles, where she joined ISKCON in 1979. She lives with her husband and daughter.

BTG Index, 2016

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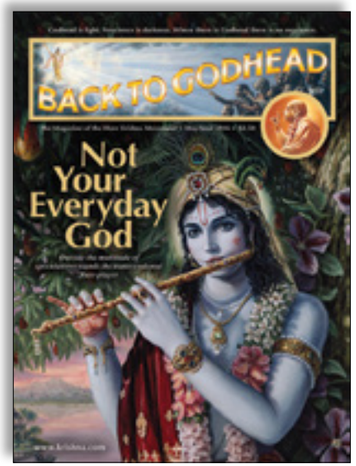

The Best Religion

WITH A PARTICULAR religion, and perversions of it, grabbing the headlines today, one might wonder, Is one religion better than another?

For clarity on this subject, I look to the Vedic literature and teachers who adhere to its authority. When citing the Vedic scriptures, however, we face a challenge: people generally fail to see a cohesive message in the tradition's wide array of teachings. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the most prominent early theologians in the line of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, argues powerfully in his *Tattva-sandarbha* for the ultimate authority of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In doing this, he follows the example of Lord Caitanya, who promoted the *Bhāgavatam* as "the spotless *Purāṇa*" and quoted it extensively in His teachings. Also, one of the *Bhāgavatam's* introductory verses characterizes the *Bhāgavatam* as "the ripe fruit of the tree of the Vedic literature."

The *Bhāgavatam* (1.2.6) addresses the question of religious hierarchy:

sa vai puṁsāṁ paro dharmo
yato bhaktir adhokṣaje
ahaituky apratihatā
yayātmā suprasīdati

"The supreme occupation [dharma] for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self." The *Bhāgavatam* doesn't say that the highest religion (dharma) is Hinduism or Christianity or any other faith tradition. It says that the highest religion is one that leads to pure devotion to God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda often clarified that the word *dharma*, translated in the *Bhāgavatam* verse above as "occupation" and often translated as "religion," is not a kind of faith. Different religious traditions profess different beliefs, and a person's faith may change, but dharma is the eternal occupation of the soul, our true self.

One of the characteristics of *para dharma*, or "supreme occupation," is that it is unmotivated. A religion that encourages its followers to ask God to fulfill their desires is not on the highest level. Like other scriptures, the Vedic scriptures contain such encouragement, but it is meant for people in the early stage of their relationship with God. As children, we routinely ask our parents for things, but as we mature, the relationship changes, and we want to serve them out of love.

In considering this point, we find a good example of something Lord Kṛṣṇa implies to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (13.5). When the Vedic scriptures say something, the statement is backed up by reason. The *Bhāgavatam* says that the highest occupation (or religion) is devotion to God, and that makes sense. If God exists – as most people throughout history have presumed – then we must be in some kind of relationship with Him. Fear or anger or even hatred might characterize our side of the relationship. But if we accept that God is a person filled with infinite love – another conclusion most people arrive at – then relating to Him with love seems the most sensible approach, and the one most likely to please Him.

The other characteristic of *para dharma* mentioned in the *Bhāgavatam* is "uninterrupted." The highest religion is to always love and serve God, despite obstacles or a seeming lack of reciprocation from Him. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who taught and exemplified pure love for God, wrote, "He is completely free to do anything and everything, for He is always my worshipable Lord, unconditionally." Such a sentiment stands far above that of those whose "religious" acts are driven by selfish motives, even at the cost of violence to God's other children.

– Nāgarāja Dāsa

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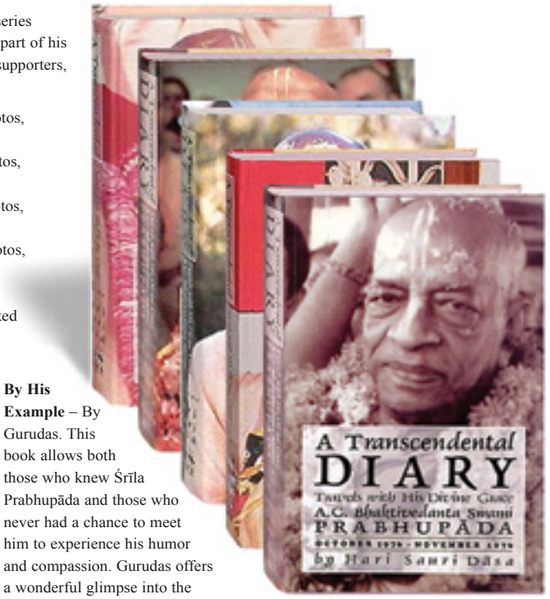

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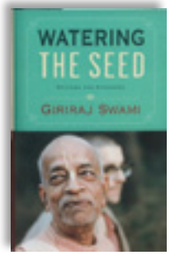

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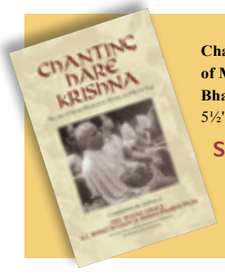

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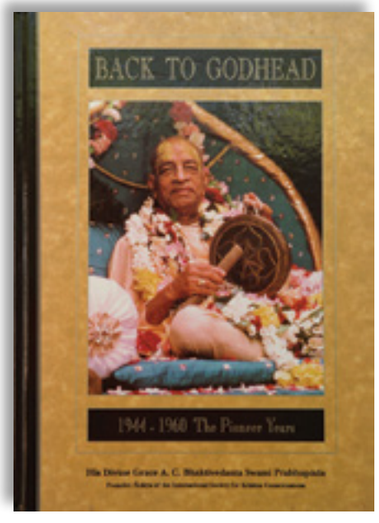

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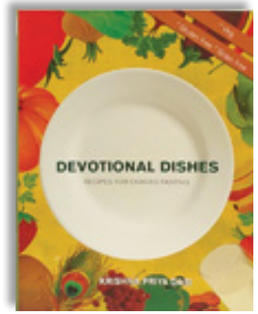

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VEDIC THOUGHTS

A self-realized person, or a devotee, knows well that this material cosmic manifestation is a temporary, illusory representation appearing to be truth. It is like a phantasmagoria. But behind this shadow creation there is reality – the spiritual world. A devotee is interested in the spiritual world, not its shadow. Since he has realization of the supreme truth, a devotee is not interested in this temporary shadow of truth.

His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.12.15, Purport

One should learn how to associate with the devotees of the Lord by gathering with them to chant the glories of the Lord. This process is most purifying. As devotees thus develop their loving friendship, they feel mutual happiness and satisfaction. And by thus encouraging one another they are able to give up material sense gratification, which is the cause of all suffering.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.30

The . . . *jīva* is eternal and is for eternity and without a beginning joined to the Supreme Lord by the tie of an eternal kinship. He is transcendental spiritual potency.

Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā 5.21

The Lord, full of knowledge and bliss, is situated in *bhakti-yoga*, which is also eternity, knowledge, and bliss.

Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad 2.78

Material *māyā*, the controller of all beings in the material world, is the covering energy of *yoga-māyā*. By her the whole universe becomes bewildered and everyone thinks they are their bodies.

Śruti-vidyā
Nārada-pañcarātra

When those in hell chant the name of the Lord, they develop *bhakti* to the Lord and go to the spiritual world.

Nṛsiṁha Purāṇa

O Lord [Kṛṣṇa], O killer of the Agha demon, may we find happiness in the deep ocean of Your transcendental pastimes, where the great waves of Your smiles and laughter rock the universes, where the center is always crowded with many dolphins of the surrendered souls, and where the swans of the great devotees drink to their full satisfaction.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
Śrī Govinda-virudāvalī 7

One hundred generations forward and one hundred generations backward of a family in which a *mahā-bhāgavata* [topmost devotee] appears are automatically delivered. Fourteen generations forward and fourteen generations backward of a family in which a *madhyama-adhikārī* [intermediate devotee] appears are automatically delivered. Three generations forward and three generations backward of a family in which a *kaniṣṭhā-adhikārī* [neophyte devotee] appears are delivered.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura
Amṛta-vāṇī, Chapter: "Spiritual Life"

"The holy name 'Kṛṣṇa' is spiritual. You can get the same benefit by chanting the name as you get personally talking with Kṛṣṇa."

– Śrīla Prabhupāda

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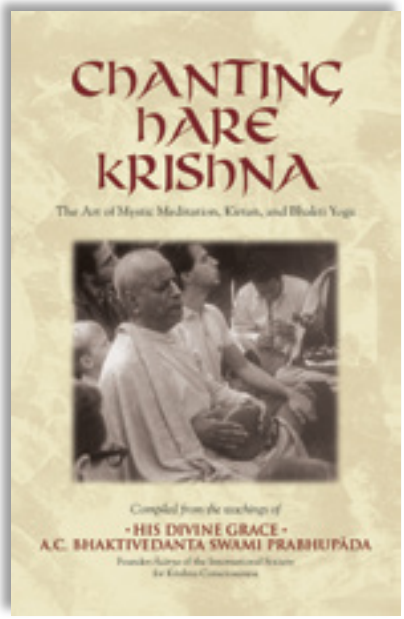
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